



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 10

Summer 2006

SUMMER VISIT ARRANGED TO THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF BATH

Following the great success of last year's trip to Portsmouth, a midweek visit to **Bath** has been arranged for **Thursday the 7th September 2006**. The coach will be leaving Sandford Lane at **9:00am**, picking up from all of the bus stops on its journey north through the village and returning to Kennington at about **7:00pm** in the evening. Come with us and see the ancient Roman Baths (the country's only hot springs), Bath Abbey (1499), the elegant Georgian architecture of the Royal Crescent and Circus, the Great Pump Room (1706), Sally Lunn's House (1680) historic bakery for those buns, and Robert Adams world famous Pulteney Bridge (1769) over the River Avon, with its picturesque sweeping horseshoe weir.

Members: £7.00 Non-Members: £9.00.

To reserve one of the remaining places contact George Ross on 01865-739208

NEW EDITION OF NEW PUBLICATION THOMAS PRATT

The Society's Speakers' Organiser, Robert Sephton, has produced, a new and enlarged edition of his book **Thomas Pratt is shooting rabbits in Bagley Wood** relating to the dispute over the enclosing of the Wood. It will be on sale at future meetings of the Society at £4.00 per copy. The new edition has improved maps and illustrations (including one probably not published before) and identifies more local people convicted of 'trespassing' in the Wood. Were your ancestors among them?

BRASENOSE COLLEGE VISIT

As previously announced during the Society's Summer break, due to the good offices of regular speaker David Buxton, a special guided tour of Brasenose College has been arranged for **members only**. Those wishing to come should meet at the main gate of the College, in Radcliffe Square, at **6:00pm on Monday the 21st August, 2006**.

Following the success of the basic history of the village entitled *'The Kennington Story'*, the Society is now pleased to announce the release of *the Ownership of Land & Property until 1913*, a collection of the unpublished research work of the late **Stanley Gillam**, author of four earlier Kennington History booklets.

Copies @ **£3.00** at meetings or from **Shirley Jones on 01865 730416**

QUOTATIONS

'Sincerity is the quality which comes through on television'

Richard Nixon

'My formula for success? Rise early, work late, strike oil.'

Paul Getty

'People who make history know nothing about history. You can see that in the sort of history they make.'

G. K. Chesterton

BLAST FROM THE PAST:

PRIME MINISTER TO BE WORSHIPS IN VILLAGE

The famous Victorian Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone writing to a friend in 1880 tells how, whilst an undergraduate at Christ Church 50 years before he attended the services of Rev. Richard Waldo Sibthorp in St Swithun's Church.

'I used frequently in summer to walk out of Oxford to a small chapel under Bagley Wood, to hear him preach in the evenings to a purely peasant congregation.' Adding *'The small church under Bagley Wood... was called Kennington Church.'*

THE SOCIETY ON THE WEB

Why not visit the History Society on the Kennington Village Website at www.kennington.org click on History and Local Societies.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Please see overleaf for the remaining programme for 2006.



CRITICS CHOICE – TRAINS, TUNNELS, BRIDGES AND SHIPS

Most of us are aware by now that this year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel who might be memorable for his name if for nothing else. He was born in Portsmouth, the son of Marc Isambard Brunel, an engineer and refugee from the French Revolution. He was education in Paris where he received a technical education that was difficult to obtain in this country at the time. He and his father nearly lost their lives constructing the first tunnel under the Thames between Wapping and Rotherhithe in 1823. It was their design for the Clifton Suspension Bridge which led to the son's appointment of chief engineer to the Great Western Railway. Some still argue that its broad (7') gauge, which survived on the GWR up to 1892, would have been better than the standard (4' 8½") gauge which Parliament enforced from 1846.

Although best known as a railway engineer, the second half of his career was mainly occupied in designing ships. This was part of his great plan of expediting travel from London, not merely to Bristol, but to New York. The *Great Western* was the largest ship afloat in 1838 and made the crossing to America in 15 days. He adopted the screw propeller for the *Great Britain* – our Society is having a talk on it in September. The ship was left to rot in the Falklands and its restoration, which can be seen at Bristol, has just been awarded the Gulbenkian Prize for the best museum exhibit of the year. The *Great Eastern* incorporated new features which became standard practice. Work on it commenced in 1853 but encountered accidents and difficulties during its construction and trials. These are generally seen as contributing to Brunel's early death at the age of 53.

Another stressful aspect of his work, often overlooked, but of which he often complained, had nothing to do with its technical aspects but in having to travel to and fro – often by coach, of course, - to attend to the parliamentary procedures involved in promoting railways. Each railway required a separate act of Parliament and a possible committee of enquiry necessitating his attendance to be cross-examined, should there be any objections. In the case of Oxford, for example, there were two unsuccessful bills promoted before the railway passed through Kennington in 1844.

He had some failures. He assured a Parliamentary Committee that he had made allowance for the flooding at Kennington but was himself one of the passengers, when in 1852, a loco had to be replaced by horses because of the depth of the water.

He was not a successful designer of locomotives for which he depended on Daniel Gooch. They might even have been partly superseded on his railway had his plan for 'atmospheric propulsion' – on the principles of the vacuum cleaner – been successful. Some of the pumping stations used in the costly experiments can still be seen on the South Devon Railway.

Robert Sephton

PROGRAMME

18 th September 2006	Isambard Kingdom Brunel's SS Great Britain and its Design - Les Oliver
16 th October 2006	My 80 Year Love Affair with Africa - Dr Charles Swaisland
20 th November 2006	The Local Workhouse - Peter Higginbotham
18 th December 2006	Raworth's of Oxford and Kennington - Chris Raworth

subscriptions

Family Membership	£14.00	Single Members	£8.00
Student	£ 5.00	Distant members	£3.00
Non member/Visitor	£2.00		

Please make all cheques payable to: Kennington History Society

If you require any further information on the Society please contact:
The Chairman, George Ross on Ox.739208