



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 16

Summer 2009

THE SOCIETY'S COACH TRIP THIS YEAR IS TO THE CITY OF GLOUCESTER
(Thursday, 24th September 2009 leaving Kennington at 9:30am and returning at 7:00pm)

THERE ARE MANY PLACES OF INTEREST IN THIS MEDIEVAL CITY INCLUDING THE FAMOUS CATHEDRAL AND THE HISTORIC DOCKS WHICH HOSTS THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM AND ONE OF THE LARGEST ANTIQUE CENTRES IN THE COUNTRY. ADDED TO THIS THERE IS THE RECENTLY OPENED RETAIL OUTLET 'GLOUCESTER QUAYS'.

MARY ROSE

It is the 19th July 1545, a very calm summer day. The French invasion is at anchor off Portsmouth, poised to attack England. Henry VIII watches from the shore as his favourite ship, Mary Rose, sails into her final battle. As she turns into the wind to fire, the ship heels over and slips below the waves taking with her more than six hundred men. There Mary Rose remained for more than four hundred years until at 9.30 am on Monday the 11th October 1982 when the hull was raised.

NB. Visitors have been informed in mid-September this year, the Ship Hall in Portsmouth Dockyard, where the salvaged hull is housed, is to close so that work can begin on a new £35,000,000 museum which will enable the hull to be better displayed together with its 19,000 artefacts.

OPEN DAY AT ROMAN DIG

There is an 'Open Day' on Sunday 26th July 2009 at the Roman Excavations at Frilford. Phone Roger on 01865-536081

BLAST FROM THE PAST

It is dawn on the 1st September 1939 (almost exactly seventy years ago), German tanks are rumbling into Poland. Europe is at war for the second time in a generation. In Britain there was a deceptive calm, the 'Phoney War' they called it. The fighting seemed a long way off but the calm was to be short-lived. By April 1940 Germany had invaded Norway and Denmark quickly followed by an assault on the Low Countries.

DIARY

20th July 2009

Members evening tour around the Historic Buildings of Lower Radley Guide – Rita Ford of the Radley History Club

21st September 2009

Memories of the Radcliffe Infirmary Andrew Moss

19th October 2009

Money and Medallions* : The Story of Coins, Medallions, Tokens & Tickets Graham Kirby

*bring your coins for FREE valuations

QUOTATIONS

Last Words –

'I should never have switched from Scotch to Martini'

Humphrey Bogart
14th January 1957

'They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist....'

Major General John Sedgwick
9th May 1864

'I know you have come to kill me. Shoot, coward you are only going to kill a man'

Che Guevara
8th October 1967

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

It is pleasing to report that now almost all of the Society's fifteen local history booklets are available for purchase at a cost of £3.00 each.



THE 'OLD' KENNINGTON

As many of you already know, I have been working to prove that the Sandford Lane causeway was put-up – you can hardly say built – by Isambard Kingdom Brunel's navvies (the navigators who actually dug and raised the railway track from Didcot to Oxford) sometime between 1844 and 1845, before the first train arrived in Oxford in June 1845.

During this study, I have looked closer and closer at the early Enclosure Maps (1803 & 1865 editions) as well as the John Rocque map of 1765 and the final Manor Farm sale map from the 1920s.

One reason for the close study was to account for the dog-leg just past the railway bridge in Sandford Lane. I had been told it was there to avoid a gravel quarry but there is nothing there to support that. A later 1880 Ordnance Survey map showed the gravel quarry located along-side the railway line, about 200 m north of Sandford Lane at the top of the rise of the Sustrans cycle track.

Whilst searching for any remnants of the quarry, I walked around the side of the hill top, into the field and realised that at some time, someone had marked the original field boundary with railway line sleepers, stood on end – the first is just in front of the electricity pole at the top of the track and the rest are at about 20 to 30 m intervals around the hill, ending at the dog-leg in Sandford Lane. They seem to follow an old trackway now solidly choked by brambles, but the shape of the trackway is still visible – JUST! It made a lot of sense for farm carts to follow the much easier shallow slope around the hill top, rather than the steep slope down the Sustrans track into Sandford Lane. I suspect that this was the original "dry" route down to Sandford when there was a corn-mill there but after that burnt down in 1824, the trackway went out of use. The 'wet' route across the meadows was probably fine by late summer, when the winter floods had dried up.

A further curious aspect of "Old" Kennington was Cow Lane. The Rocque map shows it as forking half-way along, into two semi-circular paths down towards the ponds.

A friend of mine provided the best reason for this arrangement when he showed me half a mill-wheel set up in his front garden as a decorative feature, commenting that he had 'collected' this from near the ponds behind the Manor Farm House! Searching through a 1920s source book on the Thames was a comment that the millers at Iffley had had to abandon their "other" mill after the "new" pound lock was built in 1632 at Sandford, and the water-level had been set too high, which resulted in this mill being flooded and subsequently abandoned!

Finally, I was always bothered by the operation of the Kennington Quarry, originally located just 30 m behind today's War Memorial. It had supplied stone, not only for part of the Sandford Lane causeway, but also for the new pound locks at Iffley, Sandford and the Swift Cut at Culham. That last contract represented an enormous amount of material to be moved from Kennington along cart-tracks, certainly amounting to several hundred tons of limestone! I was convinced then and now that there was only one sensible route to be used and that was river transport, which is usually ten-times cheaper than road transport. The 1803 map provides one possible answer. Along-side the Iffley Ferry Path down to the river from behind the Tandem, is shown a back-water, mostly drained and filled in nowadays, but this, I suspect, was the original route for the quarried stone.

Keep watching this space, I'm sure there are more aspects of "Old" Kennington, just waiting to be revealed. **Roger Gelder**

