



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 13

Winter 2007

KENNINGTON HISTORY SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS 5TH ANNIVERSARY

Our History Society has now been operating for five very successful years. In this time the Society has had over 50 different speakers and events have attracted a staggering aggregate attendance of over 3000 people.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

It was a bright Saturday, the 14th January 1989, villagers in Kennington had turned out in force to toast the opening of their new community centre. With more than half of the £350,000 cost provided by the Vale of White Horse District Council, council leader John Jones, completed the opening by unveiling a special plaque. Home Office Minister, John Patten with his wife, Louise and daughter, Mary-Claire, were among the many distinguished guests treated to a carnival atmosphere provided by Kennington Band and a group of amateur players from the village, publicising their pantomime *Jack and the Beanstalk*, which was to be performed in the new hall during the following week.

QUOTATIONS

'The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it.'

Oscar Wilde 1891

'A broad school of Australian writing has based itself on the assumption that Australia not only has a history worth bothering about, but that all the history worth bothering about happened in Australia.'

Clive James 1992

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions are due at the end of the year. Subs can be paid, with the completed form provided with this newsletter.

FEEDBACK

The Committee would be delighted to receive suggestions from members regarding new subjects or speakers that would be of common interest.

PROGRAMME

21st January 2008

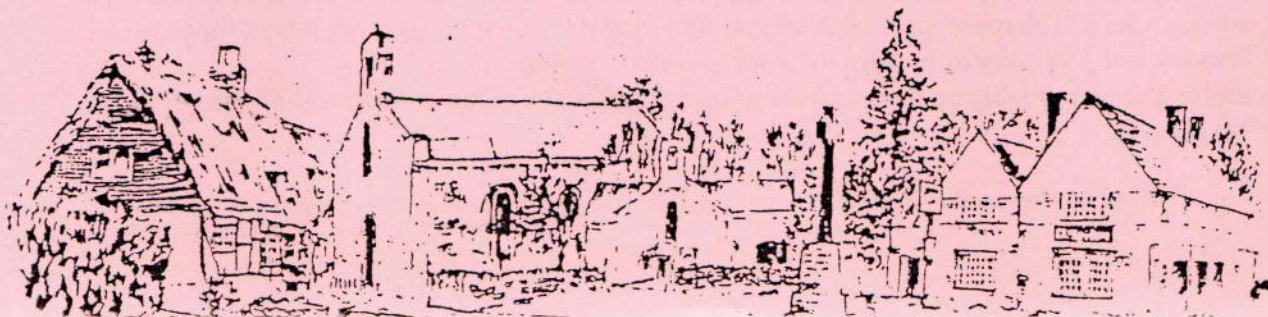
Life in a Japanese Internment Camp
Dr Ruth Baker

18th February 2008

Annual General Meeting and
Members' Evening

17th March 2008

Pendon Museum – Modelling the past
for the future
David Day

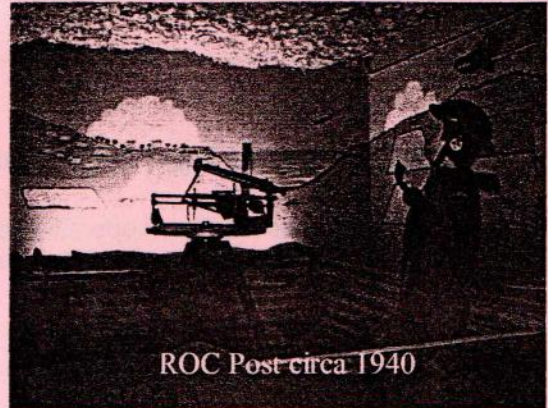


RADAR

The Royal Air Force Air Defence Museum

Whilst on holiday recently, I visited the RADAR museum at RAF Neatishead near Horning on the Norfolk Broads. The museum traces the history of Radar and electric / electronic communication from the early concrete 'ears' on the east coast, which were built to magnify the sound of approaching aircraft in the 1930s', through the early development of electronic (lots of enormous valves) radar, with small circular screens, some of which 'ping', to the microchip systems which are essentially what is used today and typically are connected to computers displaying who, what, where, how fast, and can then plot an avoiding or intercepting course.

There are several guides who give short talks about various subjects / ops rooms in the museum, starting with a very good introduction to radar, explaining in simple terms how it works, what it can and what it can't do. The tour then visits three aircraft tracking control rooms. The first, a battle of Britain Operations Filter room from 1940, where you see the controller receiving information from the ROC, Coastguards and the concrete ears etc being plotted, as to the location / speed of air traffic, using the triangulation method to try to find the planes. Then orders are sent out to scramble 246 squadron blue wing to 13,000 feet bearing 47° to intercept some incoming fighters.



ROC Post circa 1940

The second operations room is set in 1942, when RADAR had become quite accurate, and can tell not only the direction, but the height and distance of the target, thus making things much more accurate and easier to direct our forces. All the usual features of triangulation, writing backwards on the maps so the controllers could see what was going on, updates from the spotters on the ground (ROC again) and some simple electronic gadgetry were shown and discussed.

The third room shows the original 'Cold War' ops room which was in the camp, and in use until 1993. It has been left exactly as it was when our defence capability was moved away from RAF Neatishead, and a wonderful commentary was given of some hair raising events in that not too distant past. Perhaps I was lucky, but the guides who told my group were all so keen and eager to tell us about the displays, how they worked, and what they could do.



MOBILE RADAR AERIAL circa 1960

There are then several rooms for the visitor to wander around, with displays as diverse as old telephone equipment, mobile radar stations, 2 ROC posts, one from about 1940, with the observers watching the aircraft, and another from a 1970s' underground post. There is a truck mounted missile, and a collection of radar relics. Another room was dedicated to RAF Coltishall, where there are log and incident books dating back to WW2. I was just browsing through one of these, when I saw the name Douglas Bader, the date and shot down Luftwaffe xxx. Kill confirmed by ROC post xxx. I wish I had taken a photograph of the page, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

I spent a very pleasant 2½ hours there, before rejoining Doreen, who by then had finished reading her book and was asleep. The museum is open second Saturday every month, Bank Holiday Mondays and every Tuesday and Thursday from April to October 1000 – 1700.

More information is available on their website www.radarmuseum.co.uk or tel 01692 631485

Mark Horseman