



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 15

Winter 2008

HISTORY SOCIETY MEMBERS ENJOY ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SUMMER TRIP

For the fourth year running History Society members and their friends visited one of England's historic cities. This time it was the turn of medieval Salisbury, with its beautiful Cathedral. The only problem with the outstanding success of these trips is each year it becomes increasingly difficult to find a suitable destination for the following year to maintain the standard. If you have a suggestion for the September 2009 trip please let a committee member know so it can be added to the list under consideration.

Whilst on the subject of member participation is there anyone out there who could make a short presentation (15 minutes) on a subject with a historic flavour at the members evening in February.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

It's that time of year again the Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2009. Subs can be paid, with the completed form provided, either at meetings or to the Treasurer, Doreen Horseman, 9 Manor Grove, Kennington, Oxford OX1 5QY.

REPRINT OF SOCIETY BOOKLETS

Work is progressing on the production of some of the Society's 'out of print' Local History Booklets. The first of these should be available very soon.

THE MUSEUM OF OXFORD

Susie Scott, the newly appointed curator of the Museum of Oxford, which adjoins the Town Hall, has contacted the Chairman to discuss the Society's participation in joint local history exhibitions at the Museum. These talks are at a very early stage. 'Watch this space!'

BLAST FROM THE PAST

On Sunday, 20th July, 1969, at 9.18 pm science fiction became science fact when the lunar module Eagle settled gently on the dusty surface of the Sea of Tranquillity on the Moon. Inside Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, destined for a permanent place in history, then prepared to be the first men to walk on another world.

In total 12 men, all of them Americans, have walked on the lunar surface, the final visit to date being in September 1972 by Astronauts Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan aboard Apollo 17.

WORKING WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS

The members of the History Society's Committee, at their November meeting, discussed the possibility of working with Radley History Club so that joint events could be arranged. This would enable the increased cost of engaging a high profile speaker to be shared. What do you think?

QUOTATIONS

Last Words –

'This is no time for making new enemies.'

Voltaire 1778

on being asked to renounce the Devil, on his deathbed.

'Die, my dear Doctor, that's the last thing I shall do.'

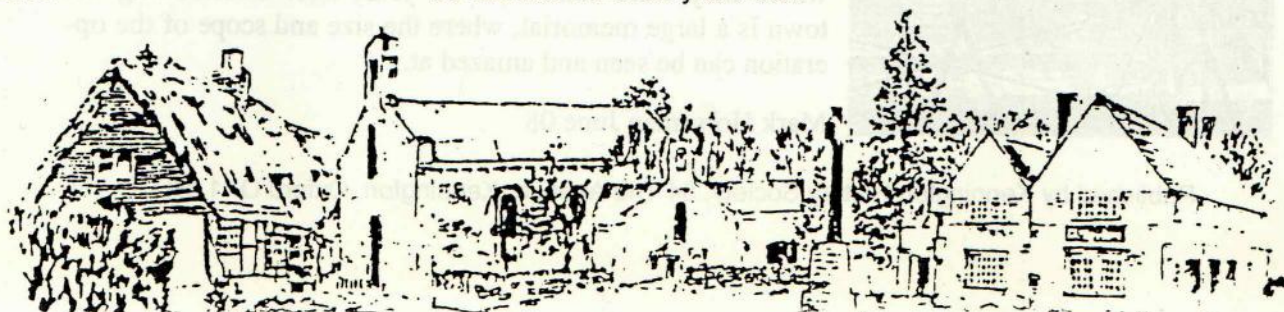
Lord Palmerston 1865

DIARY

19th January 2009
Roses and Castles: Life on the Cut
Martin Way

16th February 2009
AGM and Members' Evening

16th March 2009
The Shipton-on-Cherwell Railway
Disaster 1874
Linda Haynes
County Record Office



Mulberry Harbour Museum Arromanches Normandy France

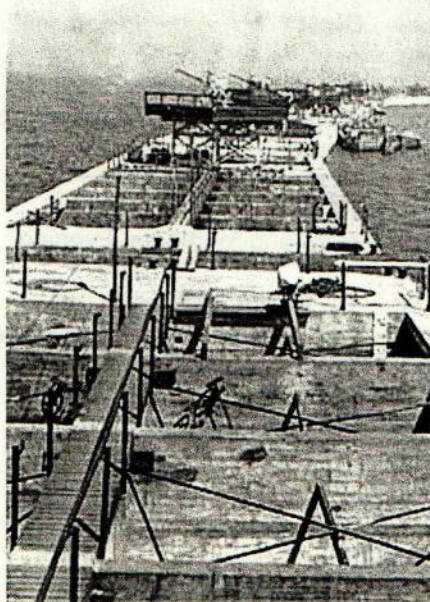
I recently visited the Mulberry Harbour Museum at Arromanches where about 6000 tons of goods could be unloaded daily, soon after D day, quantities that I was amazed at. This was about half of the goods ammunition etc that were expected to be required by the troops following D Day, the 6th June 1944.

2 Mulberry harbours were required, one at Arromanches operated by the British and another at St Laurent run by the Americans, as it was thought impossible to land those quantities of goods directly onto a beach, and it was found to be very difficult if not impossible to capture a harbour. Extremely heavy losses of both men and machinery were experienced at Dieppe when the Canadians tried unsuccessfully to capture that port earlier.

It was decided that a harbour would have to be built to support the troops when they landed on the beaches on D Day, and so a cunning plan was devised. Basically it consisted of making a harbour out of concrete sections, but which would float. Various sizes and shapes were required, some weighing over 6000 tons. Then towing them across the English Channel in sections and sinking the sections onto the seabed to form a harbour. The gently sloping sandy beaches in Normandy were suited to this idea, but great care had to be taken to get the right section in the right place. Construction began in ports along the south coast, and to avoid the enemy spotting them, completed sections were then flooded and sunk, only being pumped out just before D Day.



Dozens of old and worn out ships were employed as blockships, being taken to the Normandy beaches and then scuttled, to provide some calmer water for the initial landings on D day, and the positioning of the first crucial sections of the harbour.



Besides an outer wall a floating quay was constructed, which was connected to the beach by floating pontoon roadways. These were not too wide so a one way system to manage the traffic was implemented. I was fascinated by the amount of 'time and motion' study that must have gone into the operation, especially bearing in mind the short time scale. It was less than a year from the concept to sinking the first sections in France.

The museum has superb working models of the Mulberry harbour plus an audio visual presentation of the events of June 44. There are also frequent talks in English and French describing the scene, with people describing the difficulties, sometimes in graphic detail. Several of the Mulberry sections are still to be seen on the beach and out in the sea, where they were sunk over 60 years ago. Overlooking the town is a large memorial, where the size and scope of the operation can be seen and amazed at.

Mark Horseman June 08