



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 17

Winter 2009

WHERE SHOULD WE VISIT NEXT YEAR?

This year's visit to Gloucester was the History Society's fifth very successful summer coach trip. To remind you, the Society's first visit in 2005 was to Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard which was followed in 2006 with a trip to the City of Bath with its Roman Baths. In 2007 it was turn of Bristol and Brunel's SS Great Britain with a visit to Salisbury Cathedral in 2008.

As we tick off these historic locations within a practical distance which provide a range of varied attractions the job of the Committee is becoming increasingly difficult. The Committee is currently considering three possible destinations for the Society's 2010 visit. These are the three W's – Worcester, Windsor and Winchester. What do you think?

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

13 of the Society's 15 Local History booklets are now available to buy at a cost of £3.00 each or two for £5.00. The two remaining 'out of print' books **The Tandem** and **Evacuees Tell Their Story**, should be available soon

BLAST FROM THE PAST

SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC

It is Thursday the 18th January 1912 and Captain Robert Falcon Scott has reached the South Pole at last, only to find a Norwegian flag proving that Amundsen had got there before him.

The terrible conditions on the 800 mile trek back meant that none of the expedition would ever return home. Captain Scott's body was not found until more than a year later when Britain went into mourning for her great hero

DIARY

21st December 2009

Inn Signs and Drinking Customs
Graham Sutherland

18th January 2010

'It will do him more good than going to School' : Child Labour in Nineteenth Century Oxfordshire
Liz Woolley

15th February 2010

AGM and members evening.

LITERARY FESTIVAL

The History Society will again be participating in Kennington's free '**Literary Festival**' to be held in **Kennington Village Centre** on **Saturday the 24th April 2010** Please come along and see us.

QUOTATIONS

Last Words –

'Go on, Get out, last words are for fools who haven't said enough'

Karl Marx
14th March 1883

'Drink to me'

Pablo Picasso
8th April 1973

'I've had eighteen straight whiskeys: I think that's the record'

Dylan Thomas
9th November 1953

FEEDBACK

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



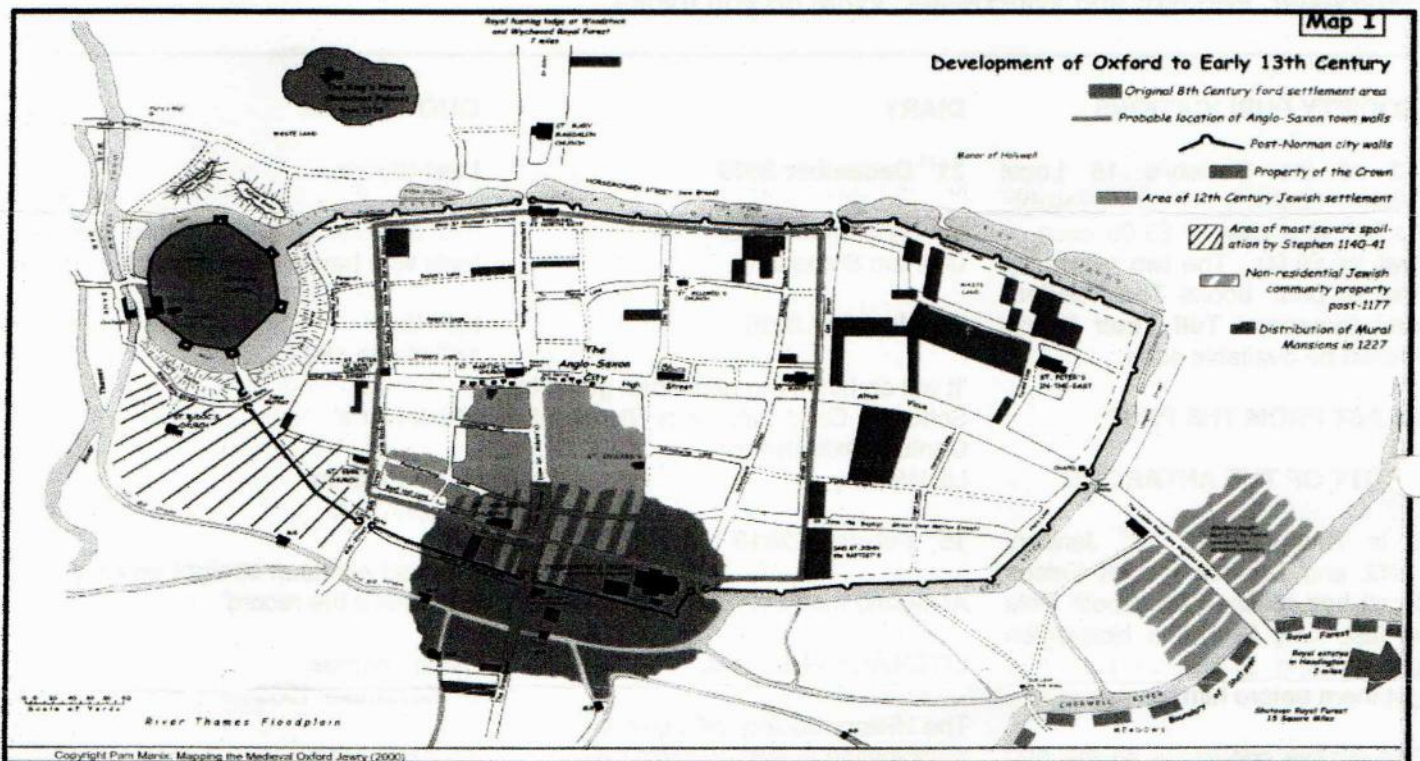
A Recent Walk around Old Oxford's Jewish Quarter.

In June this year, The Oxford Preservation Trust ran several "talk and walk" visits and discussions of Oxford's early history and two friends and I joined the talk on the Jewish population of Oxford from 1072 to 1290 AD.

To my complete surprise, after William I became King, he had difficulties with the financial management of England and brought a Jewish Community from France(Rouen) to live and work, as bankers. At that time, the religious authorities had banned money-lending with interest (usury), but since this did not apply to Jews, they were allowed to lend money for mortgages, for purchase of arms, etc, today's equivalent of buying a car or getting married – all very expensive. Interest rates ranged from 40% up to 80%.

The first hundred years is not well documented but was a successful time since by then, Jewish communities were living in stone-built houses, previously only affordable by major religious centre, for several of which they also provided the funds!. One aspect of Jewish life was the complete authority held over them by the Kings and Queens of England, who treated them as their own private bank. On death, all a usurer's goods (and debts owed) were taken by the King – whether Jew or Christian. Each sovereign needed money for wars (France, Wales, Scotland) or against rebellions(the barons), resulting in ever greater involvement, giving rise to the formation of the "Exchequer of the Jews", as part of the King's Exchequer. The civil war between Stephen & Matilda led to persecutions of the Oxford Jewry with both sides demanding monies from them, seizing their lands and properties, in order to continue their war.

The extent of the early Jewish success(~200 residents in an estimated 50 dwellings)) is shown on the sections below (about 1150 AD):-



Over the following hundred years the Crusades led to ever-increasing massacre of Jews in Europe and England, with sovereigns requiring ever larger loans for war. By 1270, severe persecution had reduced numbers and by 1290 Edward I, requiring further money from the Jews but finding none left, dispossessed them of all property and expelled them (16,00 to 17,000) from England. Whilst occasional prominent Jews (mostly doctors and scholars) were in England from 1290 to 1656, it was under Cromwell that their ban was finally lifted and they returned.

Study of this period of Oxford's history awakened interest in the location the City's Medieval Wall - but that's a story for another day.

Roger Gelder