



# TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of Kennington History Society

Issue 19

Winter 2010

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR KENNINGTON HISTORY SOCIETY

As 2010 draws to a close we can look back on another very successful year for the Society. The Meetings continue to be well attended and for the sixth year running members enjoyed a summer coach trip to a historic location, on this occasion Worcester. There was also the bonus of a delightful guided tour around the village of Marcham. From a financial point of view the sale of the Society's publications and the number of visitors attracted to meetings continues to ensure that the healthy state of the Group's reserves is maintained, allowing the recent purchase of a digital projector.

### BLAST FROM THE PAST

#### LOCAL HERO

It is 9.15am on Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1794, a year earlier France had declared war on Britain and the first naval battle of the war, the 'Battle of Ushant', has begun. Admiral Sir George Bowyer, on his ship the 98 gun *Barfleur* is in the thick of the action being badly injured and losing a leg. For his gallantry in this Battle Sir George is created a baronet and is made a Rear Admiral returning to Radley a hero. Sadly he dies in 1799 before being able to enjoy the avenue of Elm Trees he had planted all along the road to Kennington to commemorate Nelson's victory in the 'Battle of the Nile'.



The Glorious 1<sup>st</sup> of June

### QUOTATIONS

#### Last words –

##### 'Surprise Me'

Bob Hope  
27<sup>th</sup> July 2003

##### 'Shame, Shame on a conquered King'

Henry II  
6<sup>th</sup> July 1189

##### 'It is very beautiful over there'

Thomas Edison  
18<sup>th</sup> October 1931

##### 'I'm not the least afraid to die'

Charles Darwin  
19<sup>th</sup> April 1882

### KENNINGTON HALT

With the work currently being carried out on Redbridge members may be interested to know there was once a Halt (stopping point) for trains there right up until the early 1900s. The platform was only removed recently.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

21<sup>st</sup> February 2011

AGM & Members Evening

21<sup>st</sup> March 2011

'Stand and Deliver' : Notorious Highwaymen of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Century - Graham Sutherland

### HISTORY SOCIETY WEBSITE

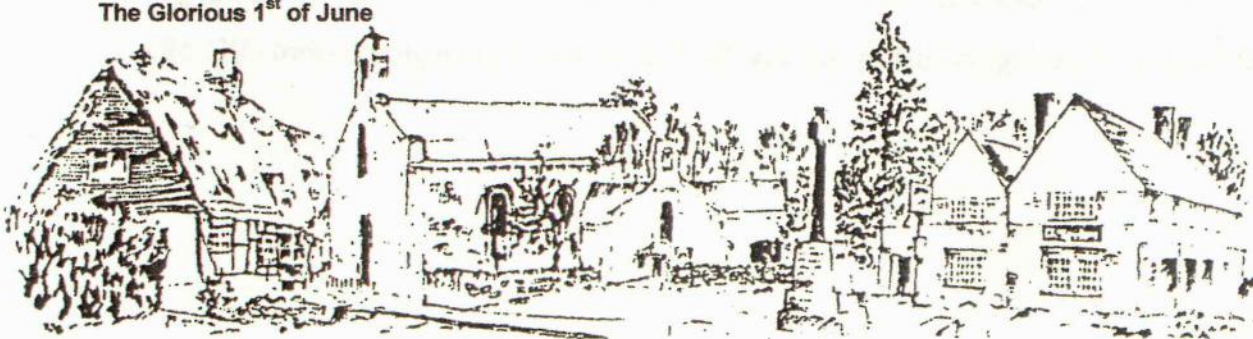
As you may be aware Members with access to the Internet can keep up to date by logging on to:

[www.kennington.org](http://www.kennington.org)

click on History. Recent research has resulted in some improvements to the first few paragraphs of the Kennington History item. Other information available on the site are details of the Society's publications and the latest report on Group meetings

### SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. Renewal notice enclosed, please complete and return to the Treasurer.



## THE STORY OF THE SEARCH FOR OXFORD CITY'S MEDIEVAL WALL A PREVIEW OF A TALK BY ROGER GELDER AND GEORGE ROSS

Strangely the story of two member's search for remains of Oxford's Medieval Wall started over a cup of tea outside a café in Woodstock. Over recent years Roger Gelder and I have taken to making what may be described as '*last of the summer wine*' style visits to various historic sites in the locality and beyond. The local series started when we went to see copies of the Magna Charta which were on display in the Bodleian Library, then there were visits to Wallingford Castle and Dorchester Abbey. Longer trips were also undertaken to Portchester Castle on the south coast,, the stone circle at Avebury, thought to have been erected over 4500 years ago and the Rollright Stones another stone circle of a similar age.

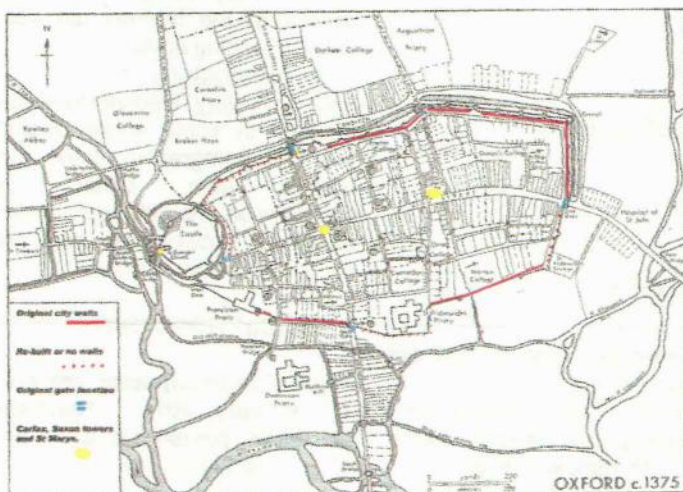
It was during a stop off on the return journey from the last of these trips, whilst discussing a walk around Oxford Roger had recently made, that the subject of the City Wall was raised. As Roger had never seen the wall we agreed, first to visit a section of the wall that I knew of, and then perhaps to look for other surviving parts of the medieval defences that might exist. We were pleased to welcome Peter Biggs as a third member for our initial searches.



Oxford like other historic cities, was once surrounded by a wall. The first wall was built by the Saxons in 911 A.D. Carfax stood at the centre of the town, which was roughly square and was surrounded by an earth rampart with a timber palisade. The picture of a model (left) shows it was a much smaller enclosure than its medieval successor. Whilst the north, south and west walls were roughly in the same positions as the later walls, the town's east gate was located near St Mary the Virgin Church. Archaeological excavations have shown that the

defences consisted of a ditch, an earth rampart capped with a timber palisade, and a street along the top to facilitate the rapid deployment of troops around the perimeter. The timber was later removed and the rampart was faced with stone.

The Medieval Wall was built of stone between 1226 and 1240 and enclosed a much larger area, from the Castle (built by Robert D'Oilly in 1071 for William the Conqueror) in the west, to Longwall Street in the east. The north wall lay just to the south of Broad Street, whilst the



south wall bounded the built-up area of the town. The general line of this wall is shown on this map of 1375 (left) The forthcoming illustrated talk to be held on **Monday the 17th January 2011 at 7:45pm** in the **Methodist Church** will not only tell the story in pictures of these two member's personal search for what remains of the 800 year old wall, but will also includes details of some of historic events from Oxford's past which were found to be related to the environs of the City Wall.

**George Ross**

Published by Kennington History Society, 84 The Avenue, Kennington Oxford OX1 5RJ