



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of the Kennington History Society
Issue 23

Winter 2014

HISTORY SOCIETY NOW HAS THREE CHAIRMEN ON A ROTATING CYCLE

Gerry Bowen-Thomas, Bob Johnston and Philip Martin, whilst David Jones is the new treasurer, whilst Jean Holt continues as the secretary.

Terry Cale has been our speakers organiser for many years, but has now decided that it is time to stand down. He has organised some splendid speakers for us, and the society is indebted to him for his works over the years.

Joan Holloway, a founder committee member is standing down from the committee after 12 years and is to be thanked for her work.

It would be good to have some new members of the committee, which is not an onerous task, but one that is necessary for the society to continue.

Your History Society needs YOU!

YOUR SOCIETY



BLAST FROM THE PAST

It is Monday 24th June 1646, just two years since Charles I had chosen Oxford as his new capital. The Royalist Garrison had been under siege for some time by the parliamentary forces commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, when a treaty is agreed, and the Royalist troops surrender, marching out of the East Gate and over Magdalen Bridge, marking the end of the First Civil War.

Just to show how civilised warfare was in those days, a few days earlier Fairfax

had sent into the city 'A Brace of Bucks, 2 Muttons, 2 Veals, 2 Lambs, 6 Capons and butter', for the Duke of York later to be James II.



Charles I

FEEDBACK

The committee would like suggestions from members for future speakers / subjects, and would welcome any member who wishes to join the committee.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

19th January: Britain's Most Eccentric Sports:

The background to unusual sports *Richard Smith*

16th February: AGM and Members Short talks Evening. Please tell a committee member if you would like to speak.

16th March: Children and the 2nd World War

Liz Wolley returns to tell us about life in WW2

PROGRAMME FOR 2015

a copy is enclosed with this newsletter, 2 trips planned

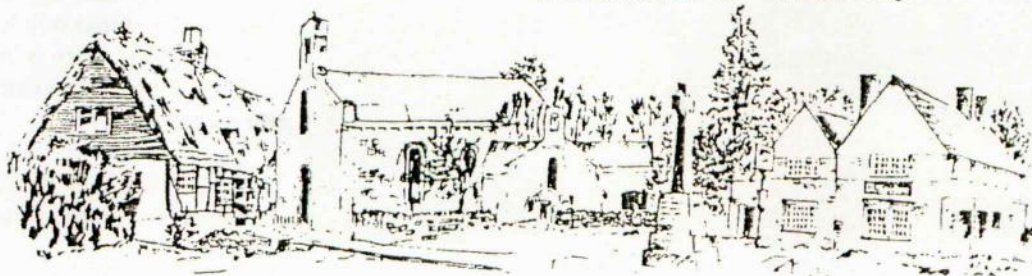
HISTORY SOCIETY WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest details of the society's events via the village website www.kennington.org and clicking History.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE (NO INCREASE)

Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2015. A renewal form is enclosed.

£12 Individual £20 family



A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES

We knew Christmas was close when we started to make streamers and cards for our parents at school. For fifty two weeks adults had paid 6p a week in to the church savings bank, and now was the time to collect the 25 shillings, the Christmas money. This was the equivalent of a week's wage. There was no tradition of Carol singers singing from door to door where I came from. And there was rarely any snow in December. The week before Christmas, holly and mistletoe decorated the living room and if you were lucky you had a small tree. My father was a councilor so we "borrowed" one from the big copse around the sewage works, where they grew rather well. It was decorated with ribbons of tinsel and candles. On Christmas eve, "Noson Gyflaith", families would enjoy making toffee and then go to bed dreaming about "Sion Corn"- St Nicholas



Early on Christmas morning we all went to "Plygain" (Latin pulli - cock and contes -to crow) a pre dawn service at 6 am in the decorated candle lit local church. It was a shortened morning prayer but with lots of carols, all in Welsh. And then a quick dash home in the early dawn to open our presents and get the dinner under way. A chicken if you could afford it. The real start of the holiday was Boxing Day "Gwyl Sant Steffan" St Stephen's day.

The New Year seemed to come very soon and was heralded at midnight by the frantic ringing of church bells, and the wailing of mine and tinplate works' hooters. This was the time for boys to sing around the houses.

Early on New Year morning, mothers would wrap up their sons before they sauntered out, having planned their campaign, to collect a "Calennig" (Latin kalens, the first day of the month).

A knock on the door, and then a song

"Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chwi
Ac i bawb sydd yn y ty
Codwch yn y bore a cynnwch y tan
Ewch i'r fynnon i nol dwr glan

A happy new year to you
And to everyone in the house
Rise up early and light the fire
Go to the well and bring fresh water

A "calennig" (an apple with ribbons and holly) was thrust forward when the door was opened, and if we had sung well a gift of one penny was given. It all ended at 12 noon. Girls were not allowed to sing until the 1930's, as they were considered to be bad luck.

One tradition, Mary Lwyd is being revived. In the early hours, young men would take around the houses a ribboned skull of a horse on a pole, draped in a white sheet to cover the man holding the poles who worked the jaws. They sang and were given food and lots of drink. The origin is unknown, but it is thought to be a fertility symbol from the venerable Mary and would bring good luck.

And then would come the snow. But that is another story.

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda a Nadolig Llawen

Gerry Bowen-Thomas



The picture to the left is taken from a postcard, believed to be about 1900.

It shows a boy carrying two full pails whilst another boy with a bicycle looks on. There is another child in a long coat in front of the gate on the left.

WHERE IS THIS?
Answers to George Ross Please