



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of the Kennington History Society
Issue 26
Winter 2017

KENNINGTON HISTORY SOCIETY IN 2017

The Society enjoyed a varied programme of talks during the year, including Church bell restoration, James Sadler, the first Englishman to fly, Dr Barnado, and Electric shock treatment in medicine. We also had an almost al-lib evening using the photos of old Kennington and its surrounds, when a speaker was unable to come at short notice.

George Ross who was our Chairman since the beginning of the Society in 2003 until a couple of years ago was made Hon. Life President. Another successful coach trip to Bristol in September was enjoyed by 45 people.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Wednesday the 10th December 1941 would turn out to be one of the saddest days in the village's history. By its end two young sisters lay dead, with the husband of one arrested for their murders and a young child left without a mother. The seeds of this tragedy had been sown earlier in the day, when a hearing at 2:45pm in Brackley Police Court granted to Vera Wilkins legal separation, with maintenance, from her husband Stanley Wilkins on the grounds of cruelty, with Mrs Wilkins awarded custody of their young child. Following the ruling the terrible events moved on rapidly. At 4:30pm Mr Wilkins went into a shop in Banbury and purchased a double-barrelled shotgun and cartridges. Mrs Wilkins had attended the hearing with her sister Grace England and at about 5:30pm they returned to Mrs England's home at 6 Kenville Road. At 6:15pm there was a knock at the door and, when opened, Mr Wilkins shot and killed both of the sisters, picking up his child and taking him across the road to 1 Kenville Road, where he was later arrested.

George Ross

As a poignant postscript to this tragic story, six years ago, 70 years after his mother's killing, Roland Wilkins, completely out of the blue, contacted me, as the then Chairman of Kennington History Society, to ask what I knew about the tragedy. I was able to help Roland, for which he was very grateful.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

15th January: Steam and Steel in the Vale
Tony Hadland

19th February: AGM and Members short talks evening. We have two speakers offering short talks, but if you would like to speak, contact a member of the committee.

19th March: 1918 "With our Backs to the Wall"
- On to Armistice day

David Holt

FULL PROGRAMME FOR 2017

a copy is enclosed with this newsletter.

HISTORY SOCIETY WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest details of the Society's events via the village website www.kennington-pc.gov.uk and clicking organisations and clubs, then History.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE (NO INCREASE)

Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2018. A renewal form is enclosed.

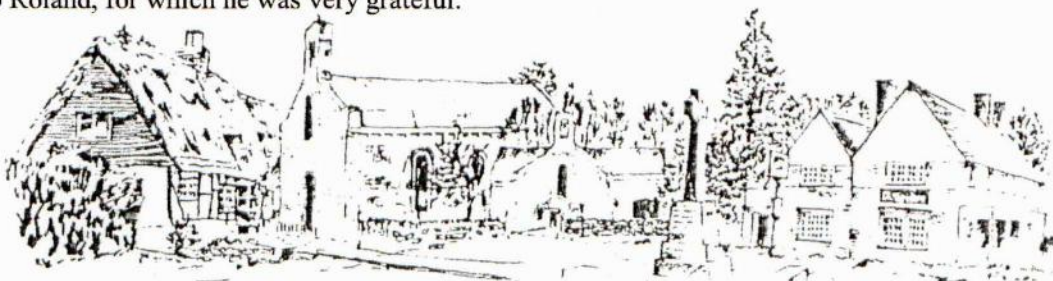
£12 Individual £20 family

QUOTATIONS

We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world, or to make it the last.

J F Kennedy

History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.
Winston Spencer Churchill



Robert Stanley Sephton [1927 – 2017]

Robert Sephton who died in February 2017 and latterly lived in Radley, had lived in Kennington for a number of years, taking part in village life and continuing his research and writing. He originally came from Lancashire, and had been a Bevin Boy, before moving to Oxfordshire, where he was a librarian at the College of Further Education in Oxford.

Robert was an active founder member of Kennington History Society, until moving to Radley where he recently passed away. He left many of his records, investigations and searches of Kennington and Berkshire to the Kennington Society.

His investigation of topics was always deep, using the Bodleian Library, the Kew Repository, the Oxfordshire Records Office in the Cowley Road (St. Lukes) and the Reading County Archives, publishing his findings in many of our Society Documents for which we will always be grateful.

One example was his extended search for the location of Bertrand Russell's residence in Kennington, where Russell had lived for several years. The information available was a photograph of the rear of the house, which had been occupied by several subsequent owners, changing the original name "Halshangar" to their own choice, thus complicating Robert's search. Finally, he located the correct site through land searches (seeking its location in Lower Sugworth Copse, via St. John's College archives – original owners of the land) along the Bagley Wood Road by the A34 bridge.

He is well known for his researches on the coming of the Great Western Railway to Oxford, and on the disputes arising with the University, who feared that such a travel opportunity would allow students easy access to sporting and social venues considered likely to give rise to problems with their studies. He published several documents on this subject. Another publication entitled 'Thomas Pratt is shooting rabbits in Bagley wood' is an account of a dispute with an Oxford College over common rights in a Berkshire wood 1820-1856.

In February 2017, the [British Association for Local History](#) shortlisted him for an award for published research work, namely his last article, "The Striking Women", an account of the Chipping Norton tweed mill strike of 1913-14. But this most modest scholar sadly died before the news could reach him.

Some of his books and pamphlets are available to buy on the internet

