

# **Good History**



**Summer 2006  
Number 20**

# GOOD HISTORY

## The Journal of the Eynsham Junior History Group

CONTENTS	Page
• Editorial	3
• <i>From the Old School to the New</i> by Members of the S. Wing	3
• <i>Dolphins &amp; Whales in the Thames</i> by Francesca Doldge, Vivien Hughes and Lottie Quinn	4
• <i>Sewage in the Thames</i> by Elizabeth Gornell	6
• <i>Canals</i> by Phillip Zeally	7
• The Thames – a map	8
• <i>Vikings</i> by Sabrina Wood	10
• <i>Isambard Kingdom Brunel</i> by Matthew Marks	12
• <b>Remembering</b>	
<i>Reginald James Treadwell</i>	14
<i>Nora Bertha Petts</i>	14
<i>Victor Chapman</i> by Thomas Sutherland	14
<i>Josephine Macy Cox</i>	15
<i>Harry Wyatt</i>	16
<i>Ken Panting</i>	16

Front Cover: The east view of the inside of Eynsham Abbey from a postcard produced by Howe of Eynsham. Henry Albert Howe was a chemist and stationer at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was succeeded as Sub-Postmaster by his son Alfred William Howe, who in 1921 moved the Post Office to premises a little to the west, now occupied by the chemist's shop. [*Eynsham Record* No 8] Thanks to Mrs J. Calcutt for providing the postcard.

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Mrs Zena Vass and the Primary School Staff for their support, to Mrs Jane Batey for technical assistance and to Mr D. Richards for proof reading, and to Professor Marker and Mrs McCreadie for their help with the Group. My thanks, also, to the members of the group, who may not have made written contributions to this issue, but have added to our discussions.

## **EDITORIAL**

Recently, among other things, we have been studying the River Thames and its importance to Eynsham and the surrounding area. We divided up into individuals and groups studying specific aspects so that we could gain an overall picture. Some of our findings are presented in this issue.

There has been a lot of discussion in the media recently about the teaching of history in schools and universities. The trend from the 1960s has been to teach so-called 'patch history', which can deal with one period in depth but does not always give a sense of continuity. I remember that even in the time that I studied history at school I seemed to have dealt with the Tudors and Stuarts over and over again and the bit I learnt about the Roman period came under the subject heading of Classical Studies. Getting to grips with the development of a civilisation's history is quite a task and it is probably best to start off with recent changes (not always considered to be history) first. This term in the South Wing they have been doing just that. Making good use of Miss Price they have been learning about the change in Eynsham Primary School from its old premises to its present site and we have included some pieces of work done by some members of Mrs Freeman's group just to show that it is never too early to find out about the past.

We have also been sorry to lose some older people who with their families have been good friends and supporters of the school and we include a number of obituaries.

However, there are two birthdays that must be mentioned. On June 17<sup>th</sup> there were celebrations for the Queen's 80<sup>th</sup> official birthday in London at the Trooping of the Colour, and for the first time on English soil there was a 'feu de joie', a 'fire of joy'. This was a volley of blanks fired as a special mark of respect for the sovereign. If you did not know what was happening, it would have seemed rather scary.

The other 'birthday' is the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Matthew Marks, an associate member, writes about his favourite engineer.

### **From the Old School to the New by Some Year 1 & Year 2 Members of the South Wing**

The first school that Miss Price taught at was near Bartholomew School. Then she came to this school. Before our school was built, Bartholomew School was where all the children went. There was a fire that came in the night time. It was an electrical fault. The fire spread to the West wing but the fire did not reach the end of the corridor.

(Elliott)

The first school was in Witney Road. Miss Price had a class of 40 children. It was night when the fire started and then in the morning they noticed everything was black. Then Miss Price looked at someone's book and it was wrecked. Then we had a new school.

(Lucille)

The first school was at the front of Bartholomew School. Then this new school came and in the middle of the night there was a fire and after the fire the South Wing

was built. .... When the fire was still in the East Wing one of the mothers was allowed to run and get the pets out.

(Ellie)

The school in Witney Road had four classes and each class had activities. One was sand and water and clay and other fun things. When this school was built Miss Price was a teacher here. Miss Price had thirty to forty children. Two years later the fire happened in the night. The fire started in the East Wing and it spread to the West Wing. The fire reached the animals but a parent was allowed to go in with a fireman and rescue the animals. The children were crying because they wanted their school back. The fire burnt everything except the animals.

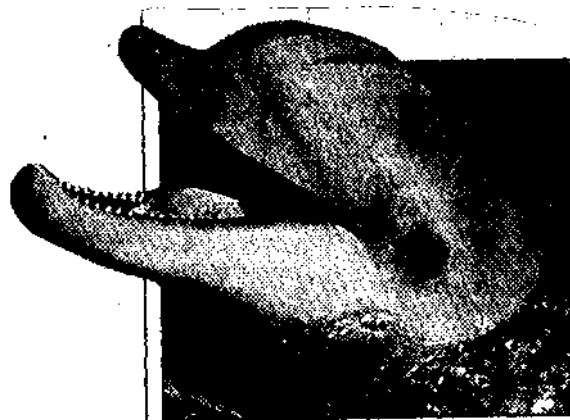
(Oscar)



The scene at Eynsham School at 3.a.m. at the height of the blaze.  
[Photo from the Oxford Times July 11, 1969]

### **Dolphins and Whales in the Thames** by Francesca Doldge, Vivien Hughes and Lottie Quinn

Dolphins, like seals, risk the long and dangerous journey to the Thames. Not all of these dolphins travel this difficult challenge. Dolphins come this way, the same reason seals do, to protect their young from danger and for the good food. These dolphins do this every year at breeding time. The bottle-nosed dolphin and the common dolphin are the main dolphins that visit the Thames.



A northern bottlenose whale became stranded in the Thames in January of this year and sadly despite a great deal of effort it was unable to be saved.



The whale was a juvenile female, probably less than 11 years old, though too old to be dependent on its mother.



It had apparently died of dehydration, muscle damage and failing kidneys.

A post mortem was carried out on the whale by Members of the Zoological Society of London

Other whales that have been seen in the Thames:

**1240** A *"monster of prodigious size"* was spotted *"to the amusement and excitement of the populus"*. It was chased up the river and killed by sailors.

**1658** *"Near about this time there came up the Thames as far as Greenwich a whale of great length and bigness"* It was said to be a portent for the death of Oliver Cromwell having been blown in during the *"great storm"* on the night preceding his death on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1658. It too was killed by Londoners. [Dr. Howell's *Ancient and Present State of England* 1678]

**1666** *"A great Porpus was taken at West Ham in a small creek a mile and a half within the lands, and within a few days after a Whale come up within eight miles of London whose body was seen diving several times above the water, and was judged to exceed the length of the largest ship in the river, but when she tasted the fresh water and scented land she returned to the sea"*. [Sir Richard Baker's *Chronicles of the Kings of England* 1684]

**1691** Another stranded whale was reported and was said to have been *"harpooned and taken and bought by a Quaker"*.

**1996** A minke whale died after it was stranded at Purfleet, Essex

**1999** A pilot whale was seen near Southend but returned to sea.

[Information and pictures for this item were gathered from The Daily Telegraph newspaper]

## **Sewage in the Thames by Elizabeth Gornell**

### *The London Drainage Problem*

For centuries, human waste has been removed from the cesspits as 'night soil' and taken away to use as a fertiliser on fields around London, but as the population doubled between 1801 and 1841, this was no longer possible. Most houses used cesspits which often overflowed through the floorboards. Many cesspits emptied into open sewers or tributaries of the Thames.

With the situation worsening, something was finally done in 1847. The Metropolitan commission of sewers was formed to tackle the problem. The first act was to close the cesspits, but this turned out to be a disaster, as London waste now found its way into the Thames. Before long, the river itself was little more than a sewer. Londoners were quick to notice the change of the Thames. The magazine Punch published several memorable cartoons showing the disgusting state of the Thames.

### *Cholera and related diseases*

The smell was only a small part of the problem, as most of London's drinking water came from the Thames. This made Londoners catch water borne diseases like cholera. The first cholera pandemic began in India in 1817 and spread towards Europe. It reached Britain in 1831-32. In just over a year, about 31,000 died from the disease. London's first case occurred in February 1832 and at least 6,000 died in the capital. Later outbreaks killed 54,000 people in Britain 1848-48 (including 14,000 in London) and 31,000 in 1853-54 (10,000 in London).

During the third epidemic, Dr. John Snow proved that cholera was a water-borne disease. One day, his water hand pump wasn't working, and he found a dead eel in the pump that had obviously been killed by the pollution in the Thames. Few medical men believed this at the time. Most still supported the miasma theory, which said that disease was caused by foul air from rotting matter and stagnant water.

In the early nineteenth century, there were a huge number of deaths due to epidemic fever, smallpox and cholera in Eynsham. In 1875, Crown Crescent in Acre End Street suffered from an outbreak of typhoid.

### *London Sewers*

In 1856, the Metropolitan Board of Works had been formed to carry out large public works in London, including the construction of a sewage disposal system. However, it did not have enough money for such a task. Very little was done until powerful people felt their interests were being threatened. For many years, the smell caused by sewage in the Thames became particularly unbearable during the summer.

During the summer of 1858 it was so bad that even Members of Parliament suffered, and curtains soaked in chemicals were used to keep the smell out of the House of Commons. Unsurprisingly, the necessary money for a sewage disposal system was soon made available.

Many suggestions were made, such as a train to carry the sewage away. Many of these were turned down and it all came to a London Sewer. It was designed so that

the sewage would be carried into the Thames Estuary, then into the sea, using a long brick underground tunnel. This started to be built and was getting on well, but it was built too near a railway line and collapsed on the workers. There were quite a few deaths. It was soon rebuilt with a new kind of brick that was stronger than the original ones. After lots of work, the sewer was built and ready for use. Many of these were built elsewhere in Britain and some are still in use!

Nowadays, we have faster action sewers and water is a lot cleaner.

References: Article on the history of the London Sewage System on Port Cities, London website.

Harris, Martin J., Medical Care in Eynsham, Eynsham Record No 14.

## **Canals by Philip Zeally**

### *How a Canal is made*

A canal is a man-made waterway, made to help people sail inland. They have been used since the time of the Ancient Egyptians, but it was the Romans who brought canals into Britain. They made Britain's oldest canal, the Foss Dyke.

England's canals were made mostly by hand, using picks, shovels and sometimes dynamite to blast through rock. Then the canal had to be lined with 'puddled' clay to keep the water in. 'Fuddled' clay was a type of loamy clay soaked in water so it could absorb no more. Steel and concrete is used now.

Obviously the next stage was to fill the canal with water. Canals lose a lot of water through seepage, evaporation and boats passing through locks. Water is fed into the canal by natural streams and reservoirs.

### *Locks*

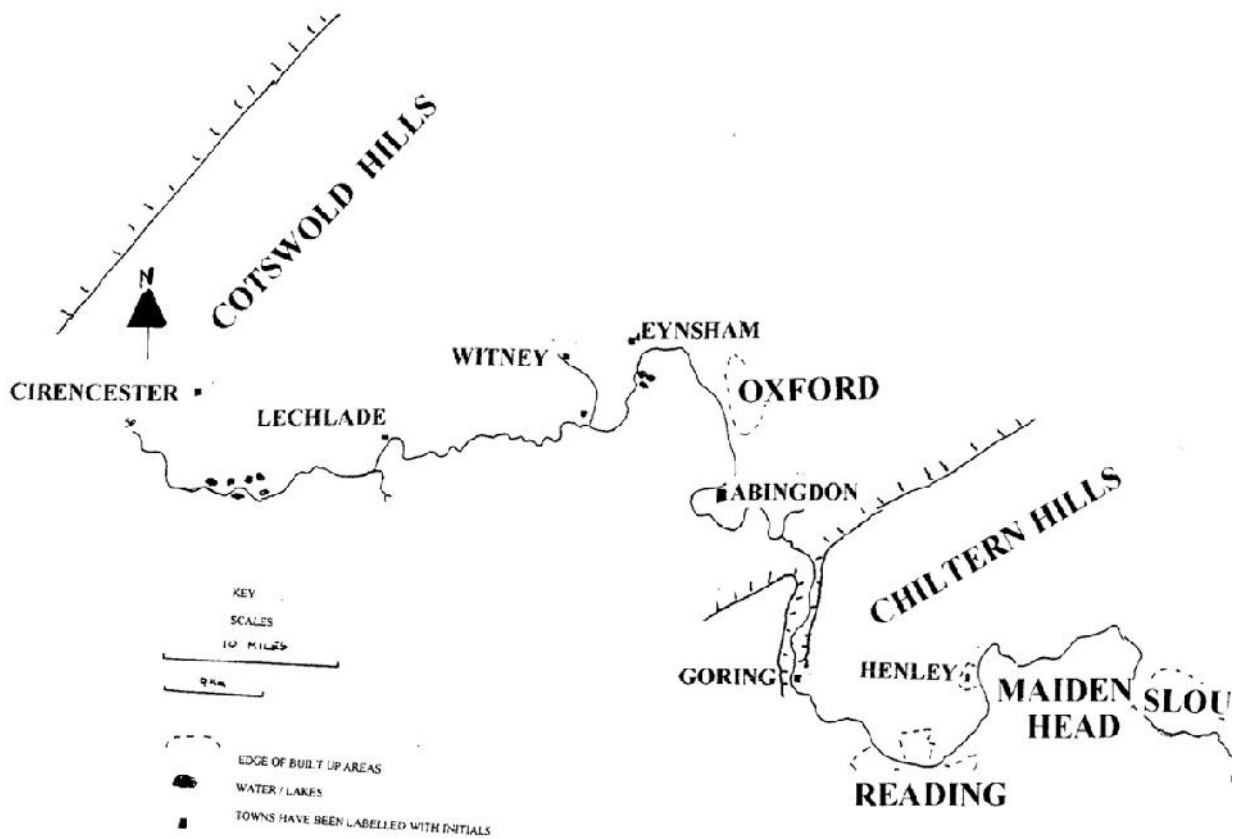
A lock is a device that lifts or lowers boats from one water level to another. They are usually found on canals, but can be found on rivers as well. Old locks consisted of two pairs of oak or elm gates placed one after the other on a channel of water. Nowadays the gates are made of steel.

A boat wishing to pass through the lock to a lower level of water must wait for the lock to be filled with water. This is done by opening a pair of sluices built into the canal bank which when opened allows water to pass through culverts and into the lock.

When the lock is full, the first pair of gates opens, allowing the boat to enter the lock. Once the gates and the sluices are closed again, the second pair of sluices opens, letting the water drain from the lock to the lower water-level. The bottom gates are then opened and the boat passes through.

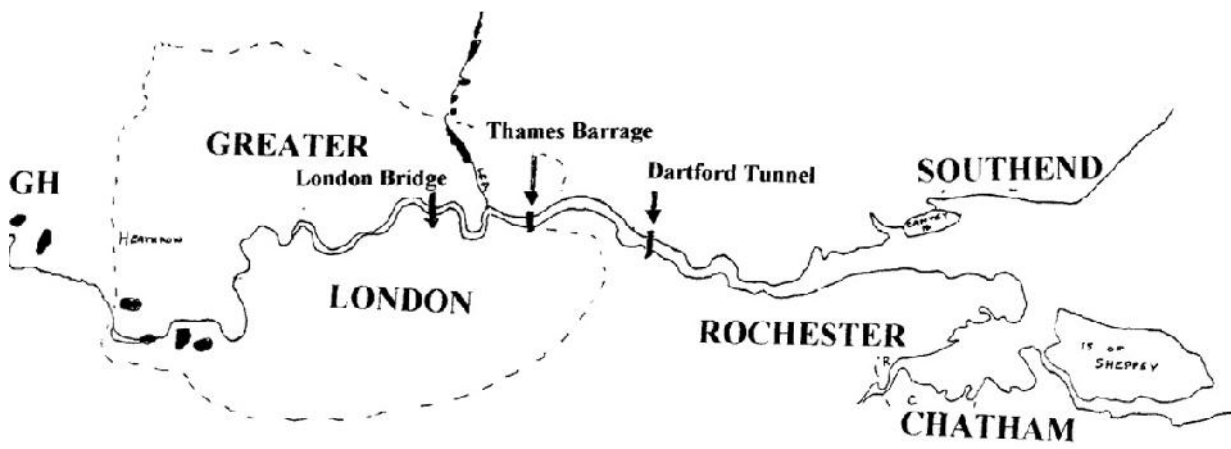
Locks are sometimes manned by lock keepers but many are self-operated. Most small locks are worked by hand, by pushing against an overhanging part of the gate called the balance beam.

# The Thames from its Source to its Mouth





Drawn for us by Professor Marker



## Vikings by Sabrina Wood

### *Viking Homelands*

The ancestors of the Vikings had lived in the Scandinavian lands of Denmark, Norway and Sweden for many hundreds of years before the Vikings grew strong enough to make raids, win battles and make new settlements in other parts of Europe. This Viking expansion began around AD 800 and continued until around AD 1100.

### *Viking Design*

Houses were built around a timber frame, which was covered by logs. The walls were lined with wooden planks. There might be a fireplace to keep the house warm.

### *For Building Boats*

Viking blacksmiths made tools for ship-builders and other woodworkers to use. All Viking ships were made using human muscle-power alone. The Vikings had no power tools to help them. Sawing and shaping ships' timbers was extremely hard work.

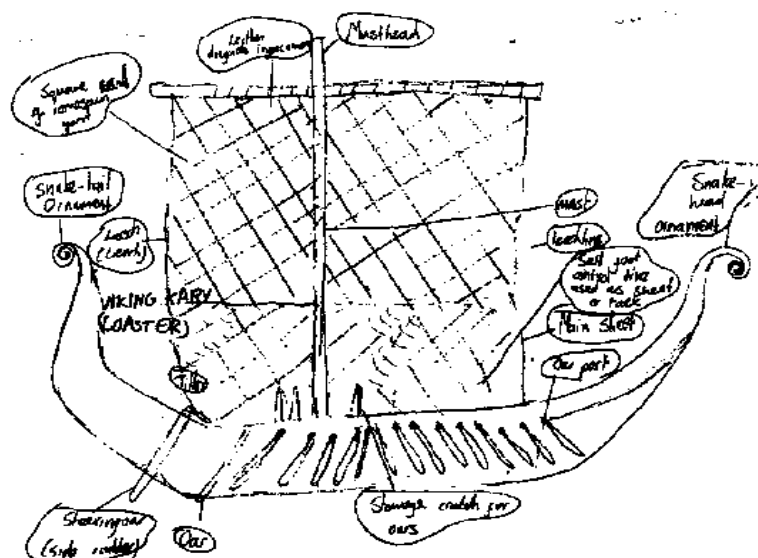
### *Excavated Ships*

The Tune ship was excavated in 1867 in a huge grave-mound about 260ft in diameter. It was lying north to south embedded in blue clay which had preserved its timbers over the centuries

The Gokstad ship, in a mound 162ft wide and 16ft high, was excavated in 1880. It also was deeply buried in blue clay which had preserved the 'boat' with its bow towards the sea.

These ships can be seen in the Viking Ship Museum outside Oslo

[Information taken from *The Vikings* by Johannes Brondsted]

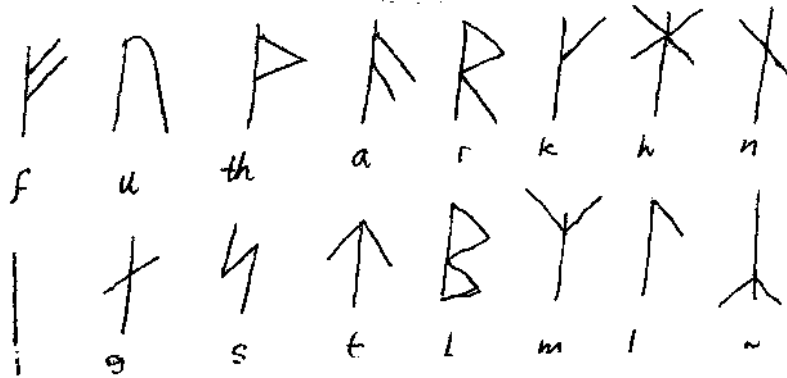


## Long Distance Trade

Viking merchants travelled throughout Europe and ventured eastward across Russia and to the great trading cities of the Middle East. There they struck bargains with other merchants coming from countries as far away as India and China.

### Writing

Vikings used a form of writing called runes. The letters were spiky because they were the easiest to carve on wood.



### Social Structure



Kings and Lords were the leaders of Viking society. They were powerful because they were war leaders, wealthy and wise or at least cunning. Farmers formed the backbone of society. They too could be rich and powerful if they owned livestock and good farming land. Thralls' were at the bottom of society. They were poor and not free. Laws protected them from being treated harshly. Slaves were not full members of society. They were possessions like cattle or horses, but if they worked hard and pleased the owners, slaves could be set free.

You can now be in 'thrall' to someone owing either money or obligation.

## Isambard Kingdom Brunel by Matthew Marks

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born in 1806, the son of a French engineer, Marc Brunel, who had fled to England at the time of the French Revolution. He had a good education, both in England and France, and joined his father in engineering.

He was very good at his engineering, although he did make mistakes, he admitted them, and learned from them. He was very unreasonable in the hours he made people work, and never gave credit to other people's achievements. So perhaps it is odd that he married, Mary Horsley in 1836, and had three children, Isambard who became a lawyer, Henry Marc who became an engineer, and Florence Mary. When he married he still spent as much time working as when he was single. He loved entertaining children, and he invented games for them, and did tricks.

His endless work took its toll though, as he suffered a heart attack while having his photo taken on the Great Eastern, and two weeks later he died, aged 53.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was famed for many things in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is arguably the best engineer of all time. He designed the Clifton Suspension Bridge, although he never lived to see it finished.



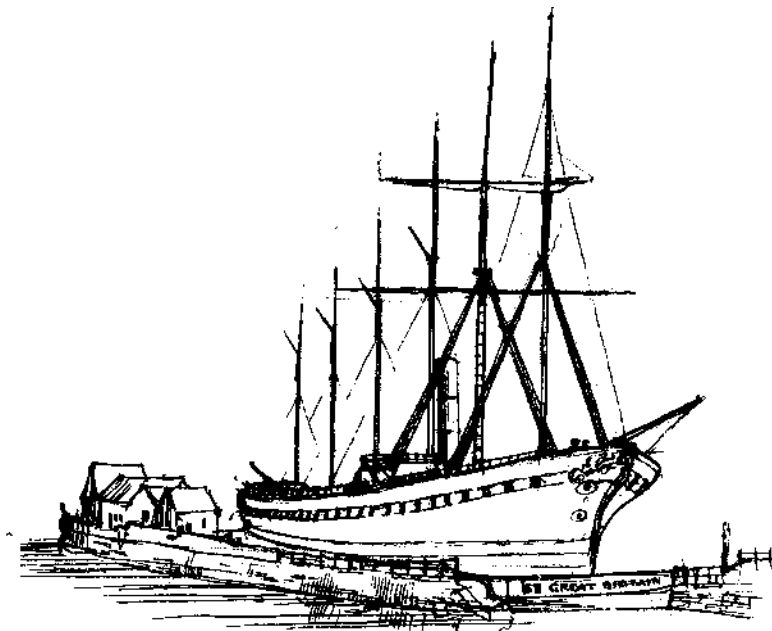
He also designed The Great Western Railway. The first railways were used at coalmines to haul coal out of the mines. This was before steam engines were made, so horses or men pulled the carts. The advantage of track was that when wheels could run on smooth plates or iron rails it was easier to haul.

The first public railway in the world came into being as a result of Britain's war with Napoleon. It was a custom to carry goods from ships at Portsmouth to London by sea, but there was the danger that a French ship might intercept it. So a horse tramway was begun, to link Portsmouth and London. By 1838 there was more than 1800 miles of track in operation over England.

Middle class people were always very doubtful of trains as they went at 30 miles an hour and more. But on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1842 the railways became respectable when Queen Victoria rode in a royal carriage to Slough. The train left London Paddington at precisely noon. Superintendent of the Railway, the famous engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, drove the engine.

He also designed ships which were of tremendous importance. In 1838 steam ships started to become more reliable. Early steam ships needed lots of space for coal and water, which were essential for the engine to run on. They were not very reliable as the engines often blew up, leaving the ship stranded, but by 1874 over 75% of ships were steam driven.

Then the race was on to cross the Atlantic. A ship called the *Sirius* won it, but she had a 4-day head start. So the real winner was Brunel's *S.S. Great Western*. She steamed into America 3.1/2 hours after *Sirius*. The average speed of the *S.S. Great Western* was 16.3 kph (knots per hour). The *S.S. Great Britain*, was the first iron hulled ship driven by a screw propeller, as opposed to paddles. It can be seen in Bristol harbour. The *S.S. Great Eastern* was the largest ship of its time.



*The S.S. Great Britain*

His other constructions include London Paddington Station, Bristol Temple Meads Station, Box tunnel (near Bradford on Avon), the GWR railway viaducts between Exeter and Plymouth, the Thames Tunnel, a Dry water dock, Maidenhead Bridge, Royal Albert Bridge and Saltash Bridge.

[Drawings by Anton Bantock of the Malago History Society, Bristol]

## REMEMBERING

### **Reginald James Treadwell May 15<sup>th</sup> 1922 – December 30<sup>th</sup> 2005**

Reg, as he was generally known, was the sister of 'Polly' Clifton whose obituary featured in this journal in winter 2003. They were both knowledgeable about Eynsham and always ready to share what they knew with the Junior History Group. Reg also had grandchildren who attended the school.

He was actually born in Cumnor, his parents having moved around a bit locally as Polly had been born in Brize Norton. The family settled here shortly after Reg was born and he attended the local schools. He started work with the Green family business where he was valued as a 'jack-of-all-trades'.

In 1941 when he was 19, Reg was called up and served with the 8<sup>th</sup> Army which fought its way across North Africa and up through Italy. The good and bad times of the war also brought him in touch with the British Legion of which he became a lifelong member. Return from the war he rejoined Greens. He met and married Joyce Betterton and they settled down to being a true Eynsham couple.

He later left Greens and joined Bruce Engineering where he learnt new skills connected with the car industry. Retirement was forced upon him at the age of 63 through ill health but Reg did not seek a quiet retirement finding other occupations to keep himself useful and alert. Sport was high on his agenda, having played football from an early age and throughout the war. When he was unable to play he became an enthusiastic supporter of local teams. He also served on both the Carnival and Playing Fields Committees. Although never a Councillor he was a frequent attendee at Council Meetings, with quite forthright opinions on matters relating to the well ordering of the village.

I shall particularly miss his support but am grateful that we in the Group had the privilege of knowing him.

### **Norah Bertha Petts 18<sup>th</sup> December 1903 – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2006.**

Mrs Petts was 102 an age worthy of note even today. A skilled artist herself she was the mother of Valerie Petts and Julia Loken both artists. Mrs Petts was also a skilled pianist.

### **Victor Chapman** by Thomas Sutherland

Between the last issue of Good History and this issue we have received some bad news of the death of Mr Chapman. A couple of editions ago Mr Chapman's wife had given us some information through scrap books that she had kept throughout her

life. Also in edition No 18 Mr Chapman provided us with a poem that he had written whilst in a local care home. The Eynsham History Group would like to send their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Mr Victor Chapman (94).

**Josephine Mary Cox**  
**10th May 1924 - 11th March**  
**2006.**

Josie, as she was generally known, was a Pimm. It was her father, Bevan who for many years ran Eynsham's post office. A few years ago we were given her Girl Guide enrolment card. It reminds us that the Girl Guides were for many years an important organisation in Eynsham.

SHEEPSHANK

**ENROLMENT CARD**

Name Josie Pimm  
 Company 1st Eynsham  
 Date of Enrolment Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> 1925

**The Guide Promise**  
 On my Honour, I promise that I will do my best

1. To do my duty to God and the King.
2. To help other people at all times.
3. To obey the Guide Law.

**The Guide Law**

1. A Guide's honour is to be trusted.
2. A Guide is loyal.
3. A Guide's duty is to be useful and to help others.
4. A Guide is a friend to all, and a sister to every other Guide.
5. A Guide is courteous.
6. A Guide is a friend to animals.
7. A Guide obeys orders.
8. A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties.
9. A Guide is thrifty.
10. A Guide is pure in thought, in word, and in deed.

CATSPA W BOWLINE SIGHT



**GIRL**



**GUIDES.**

**THIS IS TO CERTIFY**

that you Josie Pimm  
 have been duly enrolled as a member of the Girl Guides  
 I trust you on your Honour to do your best to  
 carry out the Guide Law at all times and to try to  
 do at least one good turn every day.

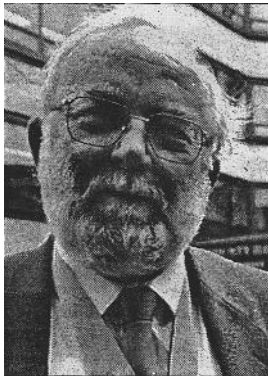
Date Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> 1925

Naden Powell of Silwell  
 Chief Scout.

**Harry Wyatt, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1939 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2006.**

Perhaps the school will remember Harry most for his agreeing to sit for the Artist in Residence, Mr Bishop in June 2000.

His grandchildren also attended the school and a certain Nick Wyatt reported on the Eynsham Primary School singing carols at the switching-on ceremony performed by Harry Wyatt as Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council in 1999.



**Ken Panting**

Ken died on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2006. He was the school caretaker for a number of years, living in the bungalow at the school gates. His wife Nellie was also for some time the school secretary. I personally remember Ken well and his concern for the look of the school and the well being of the teachers and children. He was a good friend to the school. He was 78.