



# IN TIME

Ely U3A History Group Members'  
Newsletter



Welcome to the sixth edition of IN TIME. In this week commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day we have a look back at some of the festivities celebrating the end of the war in Europe as well as a recommendation for a book that gives a fascinating insight into wartime life. We also look fondly at Ely Cathedral and journey far away to an incident that could have been far more serious for the writer, and take a look at some Cambridge street names

Please keep your contributions coming XXXXXXXXXX

## Nearly There When It Happened – Wendy Rolph

In 1989 my husband was invited to give a lecture tour in China. I went along to give some English language classes. The tour finished in Beijing but when we arrived all lectures had been cancelled. Every university we had visited so far was in a state of unrest. During the tour we always had a 'minder' and we were discouraged from asking awkward questions about what was going on. In Jinan we met some Americans who put us fully in the picture. They were worried and told us their government had advised them to be ready to leave the country. With typical British sang froid (pun intended) we dismissed their fears.



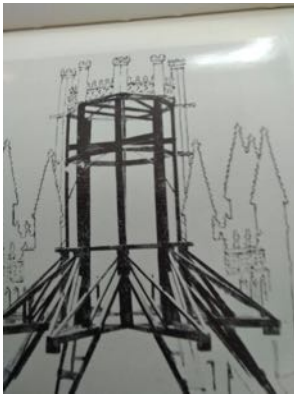
In Beijing we lost the 'minder' and were free to explore. Amongst other places we visited Tiananmen square. The protesters seemed peaceful and we took a couple of pictures from a distance not wishing to attract attention from the soldiers on guard.

Our flight was due to leave at midnight on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June but we were collected from the university late in the afternoon. As we drove through Beijing, we went past lines of tanks and armoured cars. The civilians were talking with the military and we saw one woman pass her baby up to a soldier who cuddled the child. Nothing seemed seriously wrong. The flight was nearly empty which was unusual but we dozed through until we landed at Heathrow. There we were met by a relative who gasped "Thank goodness. You are safe" The Tiananmen Square massacre had occurred overnight and we knew nothing of it.

We were saddened at the outcome. The few people we had managed to speak with had been convinced the protesters would be listened to. There was so much hope. We wrote in very neutral terms, to a couple of Chinese academics we had become involved with but we heard nothing back. We had narrowly missed being present at a significant moment in history but at least we had seen some of the build up to that moment. We were nearly there when it happened.

## [A Fond Look at Ely Cathedral – Kate Cann](#)

The Cathedral of Ely which dominates the heart of the fens was founded as a religious community by St Etheldreda in 670 but it was the Normans who began the building of the cathedral you see today.



The original central tower collapsed in 1322 and was replaced by our unique octagon lantern tower which consists of eight large piers soaring up to form four 72 ft high arches. From these piers sprout ribs of vaulting that form the octagonal shaped opening on which the lantern sits. Inside the Cathedral - the third longest in England - is the only stained-glass museum in England. It was originally housed in the gallery of the north triforium but the need for more space resulted in it being re-housed in the south triforium. The museum, whose patron is HRH The Prince of Wales, was



founded in 1979 and is dedicated to rescuing and preserving stained glass from both religious and secular buildings. Glass rescued from many redundant churches now resides in the museum which exhibits a hundred of its finest panels in the long gallery.

At the rear of the cathedral is the Ely Porta a 14th century gatehouse and part of the original Abbey which is now the Kings School. Edward the confessor while still Prince Edward entered this school in 1010 and later as King granted a charter to the Town. In 1321 the monks built a Lady Chapel to the north of the choir and attached to the north transept. The monk in charge of its construction was John de Wisbech. Around the interior runs an arcade with elaborate carvings depicting the legends of the life of the virgin, sadly most lost their heads during the reformation which also resulted in the destruction of most of the stained glass. John de Wisbech died during the black death of 1348-49. Epidemics still plague us but our cathedral has stood for a thousand years and let's hope will continue for another.

## [Things you may or may not know about some Cambridge street names. Clinton Tweed](#)

**Bateman Street** is named after William Bateman, Bishop of Norwich who in the 1350's had Gonville Court built (now part of Gonville & Caius College).

**Botolph's Lane** was formerly "Penny Farthing Lane".

**Christ's Lane** was formerly "Hangman's Lane".

**Guildhall Street** prior to about 1870 was known as "Butcher's Row".

**Harvey Road** is named after Dr William Harvey one time physician to King James I and King Charles I.

**Jesus Lane** was formerly "Nuns Lane".

**Kings Parade** was formerly "High Street".

**Lensfield Road** was formerly "Deepway".

**Market Street** has in the past been known as "Shoemaker Row" and "Cordwainer Street". Traditionally a "Cordwainer" was someone who worked in fine leather.

**Park Street** was formerly "Garlic Fair Lane".



**Parker Street** is named after Edward Parker a one time cook at Trinity College and one time lessee of Parker's Piece.

**Petty Cury** in the time of King Edward III (1312 -1377) was called "Petite curye" ("Little cookery") on account of its large number of cook shops and hostelries.

**Queen's Lane** was formerly "Milne Street".

**Rose Crescent** marks the site of the old "Rose and Crown" Yard, which had its front gates on the Market Place with a long irregular shaped yard running back to Trinity Street.

**St Andrew's Street** was formerly "Preacher's Street" as Emmanuel College is on the site of a former priory of the Dominican Order, also known as the Black Friars or Preachers.

**Sidney Street** was formerly "Conduit Street".

**Silver Street** was formerly "Small Bridges Street".

**Wheeler Street** is named after a basket maker who lived there in the early 1800's – prior to that it was called "Short Butcher Row".

### Reading Corner

#### **Ourselves in Wartime - Peter Lee**



We can be thankful that despite the present lockdown, our postal system continues to operate pretty well as normal, as it did in wartime. The picture is one of many from 'Ourselves in Wartime', a book published by Odhams Press in 1945. The caption reads '*The mail is safe: the essential public services were carried on, and the postman cleared the letterbox which survived the blast on the bomb that wrecked the house nearby reducing it a heap of rubble.*'

Another part of the book explains that a rationing system came into force on 8 January 1940, just 18 weeks after the outbreak of war. The first commodities to be restricted were butter (4oz per person per week), sugar (12oz) and bacon or ham (4oz). 4oz is 113 grams.

In 1943, the butter ration was 2oz, with 4oz margarine and 2oz cooking oil making the total fat ration 8oz with sugar also 8oz.

Meat was rationed by value allowing you to take cheaper cuts to get a larger amount. In 1940 the ration was 1s 10d and in 1943 1s 2d, worth just £2.68 today!

Of course, it was complicated by some products like offal being off-ration, and people growing their own and keeping chickens, but clearly our present challenges are nothing compared to wartime. I am particularly fond of cheese, and my mother told the story of her leaving her shopping in my pram and me eating the entire week's cheese ration. Cheese was rationed at 1oz per person per week in 1941, but was probably 4oz by the time of my offence, with a week's ration for a family of three, amounting to 12oz (340 grams)!



## How did your Street Celebrate VE day in 1945? - Roger Haverson

“How did your Street Celebrate VE day in 1945?” asks Mike Petty in his always up-to-date Fenland History on Facebook page. He has posted photos of street parties galore, mostly from contemporary local press reports, and mostly Cambridge, but it might be a fun “lock-down project” to find out what your street, village etc. did 75 years ago.

In the pre-Facebook age every party was reported in detail in the local paper. Here’s a precise of a Cambridge News report of a party in Histon Road, to give you some flavour of the events.

*The party took place at 4 o'clock on the recreation ground when Mr Waterson “Pied Ppered” the children with his accordion to the gateway of the Midland Co-op Laundry where tea was awaiting them and where they were greeted by Mrs Wing and The Rev W W Partridge, who wished them a “happy time”.*



*The good things that were put before them were jellies, blanc-mange, trifle, cakes, sandwiches,*

*strawberries and a three tier “Rainbow Victory Cake”, all of which soon disappeared. As they left for the recreation ground the small children were given a windmill, 150 having been made by a “good friend”, and all were given a paper hat. The fancy dress and decorated bicycle competition were a great successes, the prizes were 15 shillings savings certificates and 10 and 5 shilling savings stamps. Ice cream was served, and Mr. Grimwood then appeared with his Punch & Judy, and conjuring tricks. At 10 o'clock there was a display of fireworks. Then dancing to the Georgian Dance Band, with entertainment during the interval by the famous “strip tease” act as given by Mr. Swann. At 11.45 a tableau was given on stage representing the tree services, with songs “There’ll always be an England” and “God Save the King.” Donations had been so generous that the committee were able to give each of the 248 children a 2 shilling piece.*

So there we have it, Pied Pipers, magic, ice cream, dancing, a striptease and a midnight finish! Kids were made of stern stuff those days!

So how was it celebrated in your neck of the woods? Find out, write it up and send in to Maggie!



## Petty’s Pick of the Week

*Every day Mike Petty posts on his Facebook group “Fenland History on Facebook”. a number of newspaper clips from his massive archive of local events reported “on this day”*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1026849820769556/>



*Puncture-proof tyre – Motoring Past Snips April 30th 1927*

A demonstration of a new British invention which insures motorists against tyre trouble was given at Messrs Saints' garage, Newmarket Road, Cambridge.

The Otomatic Service is a powder composed of particles of raw rubber and cork and flakes of mica which is inserted into the inner tube of a tyre through the valve hole with a small quantity of liquid formalin and water. When the tyre is inflated and the car put in motion a thin film is distributed inside the tread which automatically seals any puncture which may occur.

In event of a burst the inner tubes will be repaired free of charge for 12 months, no matter how numerous the bursts, provided they are not over three inches in length.