

# A walk around Kings Langley



## History

The name 'Langley' derives from 'Langlei', a long meadow or clearing. Originally 'Kings Langley' was in a valley of open woodland next to the *River Gade*. In 1086 the lands were granted by Count Robert de Mortain to his Sargeant, Ralph who is probably an ancestor of the Chenduit family who became Lords of the Manor in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The name Chenduit survives in the form of Shendish (**Map reference B5**), an estate to the north of Rucklers Lane.



In 1276 Langley was purchased by Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I (1272-1307), for hunting. A *palace* (**Map reference B3**) was built at the top of Langley Hill, the wine cellar of which was discovered during building works at the Rudolf Steiner School. The land passed to Edward II (1307-1327) who established a *Dominican Priory* next to the palace, but only a small part of this survives.

The palace passed to Edward III (1327-77) when Edward II was deposed. Edward III used the palace as the seat of national government during the Black Death in 1349. The fifth son of Edward, Edmund de Langley, the first Duke of York, was born in the palace in 1341. Edmund and his first wife Isabel of Castile are now buried in *All Saints Church*.

Richard II (1377-99) held court and issued decrees from the palace. In Shakespeare's play, one scene is set in the palace and another in the gardens. After his assassination the palace became less of a regular royal 'haunt'; King Henry V (1413-22) and his second wife Queen Joan of Navarre spent some time in the palace, but it was severely damaged by fire in 1431 during the reign of Henry VI (1422-1461); Henry VIII (1509-1547) granted the palace to 3 of his 6 wives but none lived there and the building fell into disrepair.



## **All Saints Church (Map reference C3)**

As will be apparent, the palace had fallen out of royal favour and in 1630 the manor, excluding the park and priory, were sold by Charles I (1625-49). The village name has previously employed a possessive 's' (King's Langley) but this is no longer used.

## **Christopher Cox VC**

Local farm worker Christopher Cox joined Kitchener's call to arms at the start of World War One, enlisting in the 7th Bedfordshire Regiment. As a stretcher-bearer, he was expected to move out into the midst of exploding shells to rescue the wounded.

## Some places of interest

(use village map for reference points)

In March 1917 the 7th Bedfordshire were on the front line near the village of Achiet-le Grand in northern France. Heavy fighting lasting for several days meant many casualties, but Christopher Cox worked tirelessly, and as a result he was awarded the Victoria Cross "for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty when acting as a stretcher-bearer". He survived the war and is buried near the war memorial in *All Saints churchyard*.



#### **Village Pound (Common Lane)(Map reference C4)**

Animal pounds were secure enclosed areas where trespassing animals (usually cattle, horses, pigs or sheep) were impounded until their owners paid a fine. Most medieval villages had an animal pound. The man in charge of impounding stray animals was paid by the lord of the manor and was known as a pinder or pounder. Fines and disputes were documented in manorial court records.

In the medieval period the field system in use in England was an open one, so it would have been easy for animals to stray onto a neighbour's land. Animals grazing unlawfully on common land could also be impounded. If a person owed a debt to another person, their animals might also be

impounded until the debt was paid. The old village well is opposite the Village Pound.

#### **Toovey's Mill (Map reference D4)**

There was a mill at this site at the time of the Domesday survey of 1086. In 1763 the mill was sold to John Surrey. He died in 1770 and the mill was left to his only daughter Esther who, in 1778, married her cousin Thomas Toovey. In 1797, the Grand Junction canal was cut right by the mill augmenting the River Gade and providing a new means of transport. Following a dispute over water rights the canal company bought the mill in 1846 and Thomas Toovey leased it back from them.

Toovey's also had two horse drawn wide boats, 11 feet beam, "Langley" and "Betty" which brought sacked wheat from Brentford to the mill. In 1913, steam lorries replaced the 30 or so horses and the wagons used to make deliveries. The end came in 1978 when the company went into voluntary liquidation, the mill was demolished but the mill house was retained and the whole site redeveloped for residential use.



*Mill Lane and Mill House*

#### **High Street (Map reference C3)**

The turnpike approached Kings Langley by an old trackway from Hunton Bridge and entered by the High Street. The through route had to turn downhill towards Tooveys Mill at that point and back towards Apsley along Rectory Lane. Around 1823 a new road was cut across the old vicarage gardens, establishing the present line of the A4251 between Vicarage Lane and Rectory Lane.



*High Street, May Day 1922*

The *Rose and Crown* was originally a wine tavern in 1635, although the current building dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was used as a coaching inn with stabling for up to 10 horses, a posthouse and a hotel.

The *Saracens Head* is a 16<sup>th</sup> century building which was a coaching inn for the London-Birmingham stage coach. The nearby footpath, Dronken Lane, is a right of way dating from 1389.

The *Old Palace (Langley Hill)* is in a terrace of 17<sup>th</sup> century cottages at the top of Langley Hill. It has a Victorian frontage which originally also boasted a blacksmith's shop.

*Miller and Carter (Map reference C4)* was originally a 17<sup>th</sup> century dower house (widow's house) of the Shendish Estate.