

A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 35

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

The 1861 Boat Race proved to be a disaster for the Cambridge crew, mitigated only by the fact that they didn't sink. Strong winds and a large volume of land water led to a rescheduled early start. Both crews suffered from the wakes of the passenger steamers carrying their throngs of supporters – one steamer started its paddle just at a key moment. But the crucial difference was the basic incompetence of the Cambridge cox, who failed to take advantage of the Middlesex station,



despite winning the toss. Then, the Oxford cox capitalised on the pull from a passing sailing barge, which Cambridge had to steer round. The end result was that the Dark Blues won by 16 lengths. It was the largest winning margin for twenty years and the first in a series of nine consecutive wins for Oxford.

One key to their success was their crew's number 5, George Morrison (22, Eton and Balliol College), on the right in this photograph of the crew, who was the inspirational President of the Oxford University Boat Club. At 12st 8lbs he was also the heaviest of the crew, though light by today's standards. In 1867 he commissioned the building of a new National School on Hamptworth Common near Salisbury, and he moved to Hamptworth Lodge in 1868. The school was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott who, of course, was the Cathedral architect who re-created the Gothic interior to the Cathedral, undoing Wyatt's work of the 1790's. Morrison secretly married Jane Barbara Poore*, and in due course he became a Justice of the Peace and, latterly, High Sheriff for Wiltshire. Sadly he died in 1884, aged just 44, leaving no offspring. His widow continued to live at Hamptworth Lodge till her death in 1907.

In his memory, she commissioned a window in the Cathedral at the east end of the south quire aisle, from the glaziers Clayton and Bell. In the 1870's, they had installed eight lancets of glass on either side of the Trinity Chapel, showing the stories of the life of Christ and of the Acts of the Apostles. The Morrison window depicts Christ's resurrection, thus extending the depiction of New Testament stories. It's a fine window with pictures, including this one of the risen



Christ appearing to the two Marys, interspersed by copies of medieval grisaille. The dedication is painted on glass at the bottom of each lancet, but, disappointingly, no reference is made to Morrison's outstanding performance in the Oxford boat!

* Their life together is reported in the book 'Secret Marriage – the Riddle of the Hamptworth Morrisons' by Peter Roberts and Georgina Babey and I am grateful for their advice in writing this peek.