

The new London Bridge, Rennie's beautiful classic design, was opened in 1831 by His Majesty King William the Fourth and Queen Adelaide, in person, only a few weeks after the death of George the Fourth. A few months later William and Adelaide came to the City of Oxford to open the Clarendon Press. All the great dignitaries of the University and City Authorities were present in their robes of office. I well remember seeing the procession pass by my home in St. Giles.

I believe it was in March, 1832, I was a child attending the Infant School in Bullock Alley. A mandate was issued that every boy must be at the school by half-past seven o'clock on Monday morning, or he would not be allowed to go on the roof of the school to see some men hanged. The distance from the roof of the school to the gallows was not more than a hundred yards. We went to see the executions. I recollect but little of the fearful sight. I was faint and trembling, and hid myself behind the bigger boys. The crime of each of the three men hanged at Oxford that morning was only robbery. Political feeling ran very high in Oxford during the Reform Bill agitation in 1831 and 1832. I have seen many hundreds of angry fighting men in the streets of Oxford; crowds extending from the Sheldonian Theatre to the middle of St. Giles', University men and townsmen equally hostile in their election squabbles.

When engineering projects were engaging the minds of men a road steam coach, very much like some of the motor cars of the present day, appeared in the streets of Oxford. It carried a chimney eight feet high, and four passengers. It steamed into the yard of the Star Hotel, and was inspected by large crowds during the evening. Next morning when it departed for Woodstock the streets were crowded to see it off.

Before I was seven years of age I was one of the little boys who were selected to accompany the Court Leet of the Ward of St. Giles round their boundary, and well recollect the many amusing incidents of that day.

I have gathered fruit and flowers in my father's garden in St. Giles on the site now occupied by Keble College. I have seen the butterfly with painted wing kissing the nectar from off the blossoms of wild flowers that grew thick around on the spot where many years afterwards that lovely temple of science, the Museum in the Park, has been erected. Now I am home again.

In the first place I will give you a few reminiscences of Banbury Michaelmas Fair as I knew it about the years 1834 to 1850. You can form no idea of the magnitude of the Fair of sixty years ago from what it is now. Immense crowds visited the Fair by road, for at this period railways were unknown in the Midlands.