

# Historic Towns & Villages

# Olney

## A Town of Traditions



*Gilpin Ride 1925*



*Floral Fiesta 1986*



*Olney Raft Race*



*Olney Pageant 1926*



*Pancake Race 1956*

Throughout the past 100 years the community of Olney, sited in the relatively isolated region of North Bucks, has always come together to re-enact local traditions and events.

Two 'Great Pageants' involving hundreds of Olney residents took place in 1925 and 1926, the former to celebrate the Sexcentenary of the SS Peter and Paul Church and the latter to raise funds in aid of the church roof. The crowds at these events numbered several thousand as evidenced in the above photograph of the re-enactment of William Cowper's famous work 'John Gilpin'.

The Olney Pancake Race held every year on Shrove Tuesday was revived in 1948 (although it is thought to have originated in 1445). It has been an international event since 1950 when Liberal in Kansas, USA challenged Olney to an annual competition. It has been 'going strong' with faster times ever since.

The Olney Floral Fiesta was a very successful event which started in the mid 1960s. At its peak the event lasted for eight days each June. The highlight was a carnival procession around the town followed by entertainment in the East Street Recreation Ground. Sadly the cost of insurance for the vehicles used as floats hastened its demise after some 40 years. However, the Olney Raft Race on the Great Ouse between the A509 road bridge and the 'Old Bathing Place' survived and is very much 'ongoing'.

Olney also now has its extremely successful 'Dickens of a Christmas' event, held annually on a Sunday in early December. Its main aim is to raise funds for charity and which, in true Olney fashion, again attracts thousands of visitors.

[www.olneyhistory.org.uk](http://www.olneyhistory.org.uk)