

Traditional MILTON KEYNES

Looking ahead...

The Fenny Stratford Poppers

Thursday 11th November 2010



Photo courtesy of MK Citizen

‘Volleys of gunpowder explosions from the churchyard!’

‘On every St Martin’s Day, November 11th, volleys of gunpowder explosions from the churchyard disturb the quiet of Fenny Stratford...

‘This is part of a curious celebration which has taken place every year for over two centuries to commemorate Dr Thomas Willis (1621 – 1675), the

famous anatomist-physician and Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford.’

(William Cone, Professor of Neurosurgery, Canadian Medical Association Journal, 1969)

A tradition begun by Dr Willis’ grandson, the local 18th century benefactor Browne Willis, is that every November 11th at 12 noon, 2pm and 4pm, six tankard-shaped cannons each weighing 9 kilos (20lbs) – the Fenny Poppers – are plugged with gunpowder and well-rammed newspaper, and fired.