



This popular exhibit is one of the oldest large-scale maps of Marlow. It was drawn by a master at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, one William Francis. Unfortunately, he was considered to be a trouble maker and often wrote in the press attacking Benjamin Disraeli MP. However, this fiery radical also did quite a lot of good. In 1829 he revealed the incompetence of John Millington, the first person to attempt to design the new Marlow bridge. The Buckinghamshire Gazette wrote: "We owe...a debt of justice to Mr. Francis, of Marlow, for his bold and fearless attempt to unmask the pretensions of our Trans-Atlantic engineer, and showing to the public the value of claims, which had not one atom of sound science to support them." Finally, though, he was convicted of libel in 1834 and was sentenced to three months at Aylesbury jail. Not surprisingly he lost his job.

Most local visitors look to see if their house is mentioned but they forget the map is nearly 200 years old and the town was then much smaller. However, it is worth noting the extent of the 'parish', denoted by a faded brown line, which excludes the church. Also note the present wooden bridge from St Peter Street to the opposite bank at the Compleat Angler, with the position of the 'proposed new bridge' on the site of the current structure. The older version of All Saints Church is drawn in position on the north bank. The church will be the subject of a future 'Object in Focus'. The numbers all across the map run in sequence and do not relate to property or house numbers but probably to a separate 'key' which we do not have. See what unusual features you can find. -

The map itself was presented to the Town Council by Kenneth Balfour, Quoitings, Oxford Road, Marlow. He also donated to the town the 'May Balfour Garden' in Institute Road, opposite the Library, in memory of his mother: a lovely, relatively quiet area to sit and contemplate the magnificent sundial. The map is currently on loan to the Marlow Museum.