

Big Babies, Beer & Buckled Wheels

At 11:30am on Easter Monday in 1962 a large, excited, roaring crowd in a holiday mood gathered in the town centre. They were there to see the Comic Pram Race, organised by the Bicester Round Table. A charity event that received so much support that it went on to become an annual event that ran for a number of years.

The Bicester Advertiser later reported that the event was a tremendous and boisterous success, as competitors, sporting flamboyant hats, dressed in fantastic infants clothes and sucking succulent dummies and bottles, drew loud peals of laughter and delight from the thronging people surging in their hundreds down Sheep Street.

An astounding assembly of bizarre prams were lined up. Some donated, some borrowed, and others taken out of ditches.

Mr F.T.J. Hudson JP, brandishing a pistol, started the race in Bell Lane with a resounding shot. Like the charge of the Light Brigade, the eager sportsmen rushed for their ancient vehicles; a few with the swiftness of deer, but many with the steady, measured gait of cart-horses.

Collisions and breakdowns occurred early in the race with pram wheels buckling under the weight of valiant heavyweights. Other competitors were pitched out and rolled in the road like wounded gladiators. Dauntless, they struggled back into their prams, urged on by the cheering crowd, which swayed back and forth in fierce identification with these bound dynamos of human muscle and desire.

Down Sheep Street the teams careered, stopping at five pubs on the way to drink beer placed on tables outside. After rounding in Market Square they returned up Sheep Street towards the finish line. They devoured



buns at a stall with indigestible speed, but victory was by now in sight.

Messrs. Pat Smith and Edward Shaw, representing the White Lion, passed the winning line first, having completed the course in the astonishing time of 5 minutes and 44.2 seconds. They certainly deserved the cup, and accompanying prize of 4.5 gallons of gloriously refreshing beer!

Mr T. Earle, chairman of the Bicester Round Table, thanked the public for their support before introducing Mr T. Hudson, who formally presented the club's challenge trophy to the winners.

There were 24 entries, with two people comprising each team. The White Lion entered 7 teams; Hill Billies from Quainton 3; the Bull at Launton 4; and Turners Arms, Ambrosden entered 2. Other entries were by Messrs. Rhodes, the builders; the Rugger Club; and Bicester Motorcycle and Car Club. Mr Roy Cadle, represented Grace's fish shop and Messrs. Savins and Varney, of Middleton Stoney, also competed.

- Matthew Hathaway



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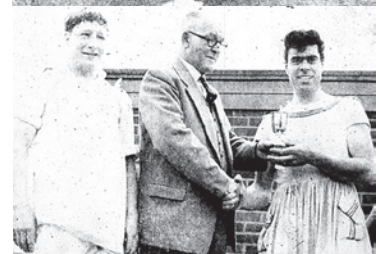
Dates For Your Diary

Travelling in the Middle Ages Talk
20th April - 7:30pm
see page 6

May Newsletter Submissions Deadline
24th April

St Albans Trip
16th May

Oxford's Historic Waterways Talk
18th May - 7:30pm



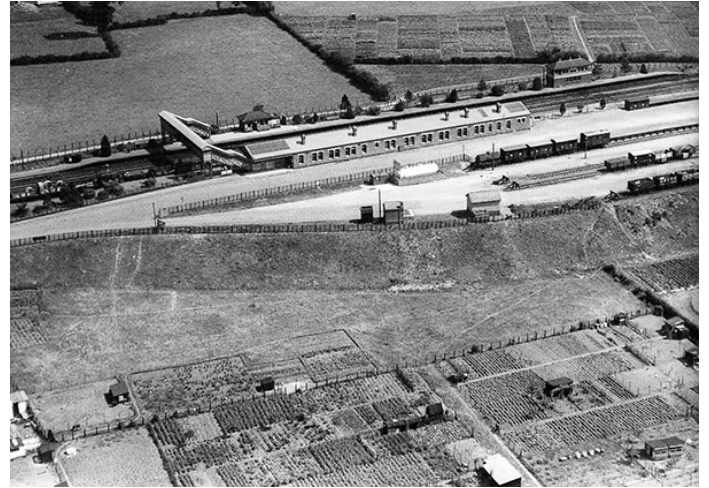
Chairman's Ramblings

A few weeks ago I had a request from a villager that the Parish Council look at allotments (this was with my Parish Clerk hat on). Parish Councils have the power to provide allotments for personal cultivation and have a duty to do so where there is a demand. If we can't get a local landowner to sell us some land then we do have the right to compulsory purchase the land, although that does have to be also agreed by the Secretary of State. I'm hoping that we don't have to go down that route because it's likely to cause arguments in the village that will go on for years!

There were allotments on Weston airfield during World War II but in general, many villages did not need allotments because cottages usually had large gardens. But with new developments and especially in towns where small or almost non-existent gardens prevail, there can be quite a demand. A recent government report said that in some areas there was a 40 year waiting list for an allotment!!!

But the provision of allotments wasn't a World War II phenomena – during the First World War, a progressive shortage of food at home prompted the government to give local authorities power to take over unoccupied land for allotments. By the end of 1917 there were over 1½ million plots. But after the war, the numbers fell so that by 1939, the number of plots were down to nearly 800,000. Much of the land that had been originally requisitioned was used for residential developments. What remained was mostly land specifically bought for allotments by the local authorities and also land leased by the railway companies. Bicester had extensive allotments and smallholdings alongside the London – Banbury railway line – as you can see in this aerial photograph of Bicester North station, taken in 1929.

The government encouraged the formation of allotment Associations – fertilisers and seeds were distributed via them to the allotment holders. As part of the Dig for Victory campaign there were many radio programmes with “experts” extolling the virtues of “growing your own”. However, certain seeds became in short supply - many seed companies relied on seed supplies coming from mainland Europe where a warmer



climate guaranteed supplies. Allotment holders had to rely on old wives tales of weather lore when the BBC stopped broadcasting weather forecasts as it might “aid the enemy”!

At one point onions were in short supply – the bulk of them coming from France and Holland. Who can remember French onion sellers (from Brittany) – onion Johnnies - with long chains of onions hanging from the handle-bars and cross-bars of their bikes and wearing the traditional French beret? But the war put a stop to that - such was the scarcity that individual onions were sometimes given as birthday presents! A Punch cartoon of the time showed a well to do lady wearing a string of onions around her neck and explaining to her friend “They are real you know!”

Looking closely at the above photograph one can make out not just rows of vegetables but chicken houses, pig-sties and bee-hives. Rich pickings for those willing to run the risk of a prison sentence if caught stealing from allotments. Such was the problem that plot watchers had to be recruited for night-time security. And a local person was fined 40 shillings for breaking the blackout by allowing a light from a bonfire on an allotment to show at night!

The war time “Dig for Victory” campaign wasn't as successful as the organisers had hoped. But “growing your own” became a positive national experience that has survived to this day. Long live allotments!

- Bob Hessian

St Albans Cathedral Tour



St Edburg's Foundation has organised a coach trip to St Albans on Saturday 16th May. This includes a guided tour of the Cathedral and allows you plenty of time to explore the city or visit the Roman remains of Verulamium.

The coach leaves from outside the Littlebury Hotel at 9:00am and will depart from St Albans at 4:00pm.

The trip is open to both Foundation members and non-members.

£15 for members; £20 for non-members

For more information or to book a place please contact:

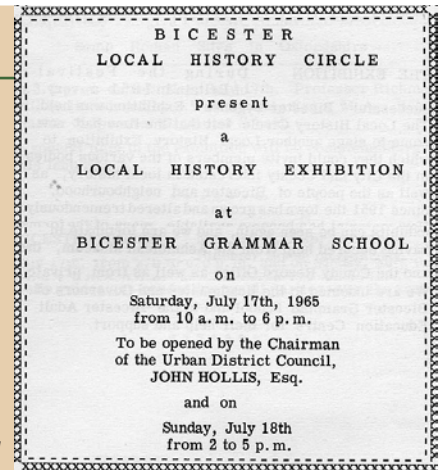
Colin Duckworth (Bic. 325581).

Archive Update

There are a few interesting items in the Archive about Bicester Local History Circle, including their 1965 exhibition leaflet.

They were formed in September 1956, the President being Major Fane, the Secretary Miss G. H. Dannatt and Treasurer Mr. P. C. King. They met in Claremont House and their first talk was by Dr. Hassall of the Bodleian Library, speaking about 'A Thousand Years' Record of an Oxfordshire Village' (Wheatley). We would like to add to the collection if possible, so we have a complete record of the local history meetings and events which have taken place in Bicester. Can anyone help, please?

- Gill King



Marj's Memories Buckingham's Lane

Buckingham's Lane (now Aldershot Lane), was always a favourite place to go for picnics and other fun activities. Mr Buckingham, who owned the farm up the end of the lane, delivered milk around the houses in Bicester. He would come to the door with a big churn-like container of milk from the farm; he used a ladle-like measure. He'd ask, "one pint or two?". He had two daughters called Jean and Winnie.

The impressive water tower was to the left of the entrance to the lane and the bridge and railway bank to the right. About half-way up the lane, on the left, were the stone pits. The water was deep at one end, with a high stone bank; but we used to swim and paddle in the shallow end and, at times, the muddy bank was covered with hundreds of tiny frogs! This ended when it was used as a dump.

The hedges up the lane were covered with dog roses, sloes and blackberries. We picked the blackberries and always went home well stained around the mouth and teeth. I liked to put the blackberries in a dish with sugar and milk and eat them like cereal. The sloes were often collected by, or for, our parents to make sloe wine for Christmas.

In the autumn we went mushrooming up there. When there was a project like that we would contact each other and, if necessary, knock the doors early in the morning for friends to go on such ventures. The mushrooms were very tasty and juice in the frying pan was as black as ink!

My auntie, a war widow, in her twenties, always had family from London staying during the war; they loved having picnics in Buckie's Lane (as we called it). What nicer way to while away a Sunday afternoon?

- Marjorie Dean MBE

We would like to wish Marj, our regular columnist, a very happy 80th birthday and a speedy recovery from her recent operation.

Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser & Mid-Oxon Chronicle)

25th April 1865

JUBILEE FESTIVITIES - Ardley was the scene of a very pleasant and interesting festival. The Rev. John Lowe, having been Rector of Ardley for 50 years, invited all his parishioners to dine with him in commemoration of so unusual a circumstance.

The celebration began by morning service in the parish church, which was well filled on the occasion. After a little interval, the Rector, with his relations and friends, proceeded to the old Tithe Barn, which had been ornamented with flags and flowers. Here at least 100 children, including 5 from Fewcott, and nearly all the women of Ardley, sat down to a dinner of beef and plum-pudding.

When all were satisfied the company adjourned to the field immediately under the Rectory windows, and the children were entertained with a variety of games. At half-past 3, the men of Ardley sat down to dinner, bringing up the number of guests, in all, to rather more than 300.

9th April 1915

ACCIDENTS WITH REMOUNTS - Two accidents have occurred this week in connection with the remounts quartered at Bicester.

On Wednesday Mr H Brain was thrown from one of the horses whilst at exercise and sustained what were at first thought very serious injuries. He was removed to Bicester Nursing Home where he is progressing favourably.

This Friday morning a horse attached to a wagon bolted from Old Place Yard stables and came into collision with the gate posts at the entrance. This caused the shafts to break, and the animal continued its career through the town and almost to Blackthorn before it was caught.

30th April 1965

ROYAL VISITORS WANTED TO REMAIN INCOGNITO - While piloting a helicopter on Monday afternoon Prince Philip made an unexpected landing on the parade ground at 16 Battalion, R.A.O.C., Bicester Garrison to avoid a storm. The Queen Mother was flying with him in the helicopter, a Whirlwind of the Queen's Flight.

The Royal visitors sat in the helicopter for about five minutes until the storm passed over.

The journey was a private one, Prince Philip was flying the Queen Mother from Windsor to the house of some friends in Oxfordshire.

Seven-a-Side Rugby

Back in April 1964 fellow BLHS member Stafford Nash featured in an article in the Bicester Advertiser that later took the April spot in their "Review of the Year".

They wrote: Creating what must surely be a national record - seven brothers made up a team in a seven-a-side Rugby tournament. They are the Nash brothers of Bicester, pictured here with their parents Mr. and Mrs. Nash. They are, from left to right (back row) Trevor, Lawrence, Paul, Stafford. (Front row) Clive, Clifford and Graham.



Luftwaffe Crash

RAF GROUND STAFF SHOOT DOWN NAZI RAIDER - A German bomber recently emerged from a low layer of cloud above a group of ground defence crews of the R.A.F. Army Co-operation Command. For long these gunners had been waiting to test their skill against an enemy raider, and they were ready. The German airman swept the ground with a hail of machine-gun bullets. Disregarding this vicious attack, the R.A.F. ground crews held their fire and then took a steady aim. The raider, still firing, circled around them. But the gunners continued firing too - and fired so accurately that the Nazi aircraft crashed a few miles away and its crew were killed. Only one R.A.F. man felt disappointed. His gun jammed as the Germans approached him. Though he tried hard to make the necessary repairs he was too late to have a shot at the enemy. Nevertheless, he shares in the official congratulations sent to the gunners by their commanding officer.

That short piece, printed in the Bicester Advertiser on the 18th April 1941 briefly describes the final moments of the Junkers Ju 88A-5 4203 V4+FV that was shot down close to Arccott at about 11pm on the 10th April 1941. She was on her way back from a raid on Birmingham and may already have been damaged by a Hawker Hurricane from No.151 Squadron. She is believed to have cart-wheeled across a field, ending up at the edge of the hedge line, where she burnt out. All four crew members were killed in the crash.

The Pilot was 28 year old Walter John, from Marklissa. The Observer was 27 year old Josef Berger (pictured), from Freising. The Radio Operator was 23 year old Erich Sadegor, from Angersdorf. The Gunner was 22 year old Heinrich Schmid, from Baden.



The bodies of the four crewmen were recovered from the wreckage and buried together in one plot in the churchyard of St Lawrence's Church, Caversfield. At the time only two of the bodies, Berger and Sadegor, were identifiable so the other two are listed in the burials register as unknown.

In 1959 the German Government began the process of gathering all the individual German war burials in the country together in one place. With the help of the British Government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (who had been caring for the graves up until then) they found a suitable site at Cannock Chase, just north of Birmingham, and in 1961 they started moving all the burials.

In November 1961 the faculty was granted allowing the bodies in Caversfield to be exhumed. Shortly after that they were moved to Cannock Chase and reburied. The four men still share one grave, but at least now they are all named on the headstone.


- Matthew Hathaway



A similar Junkers Ju 88A-5



Parts of the aircraft were still being dug up in the field in the 1990s

GRAYLINE
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 14th
Excursion to Wembley Ice Show
Ali Baba and The Forty Thieves
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Coach leaves Market Square 5 p.m.

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Adverts taken from Bicester Advertiser - January 1965

Village History Bainton



Bainton is a small hamlet close to Stoke Lyne. The name derives from the Old English for "Bada's farm".

In 1086 the Domesday Book records that the manor was held by Ghilo de Picquigny, had three households and a total value of £2.

In 1279 it consisted of 17 households. In 1316 18 villagers were assessed to pay tax, but by 1520 the figure had fallen to just five.

In 1530 the manor was sold to Edward Peckham, cofferer to Henry VIII, and John Williams, later 1st Baron Williams of Thame.

In 1613 Edward Ewer, of Bucknell, sold the manor to Sir William Cope, 2nd Baronet of Hanwell, for £5,300. A legal dispute between them ensued which ended with Ewer recovering the manor in 1628. But the Ewer family could not afford to keep Bainton and sold the manor again in 1637.

By the middle of the 17th century Bainton had been converted from arable farming to pasture. This required less labour so the hamlet became depopulated and by the 1950s it comprised only four farmhouses and a cottage.

Bainton Manor Farm is a coursed rubblestone house. It was constructed towards the end of the 16th century, during the Great Rebuilding of England, originally as the manor house. In 1783 John Warde, founder and first Master of the Bicester Hunt, used it as a hunting-box. Joseph Bullock, of Caversfield, had bought the manor and the two men together built stables and kennels there. 330 yards northwest of the hamlet stands an obelisk that was erected in memory of John Warde's favourite foxhound, Lady.

- Matthew Hathaway

Roll of Honour

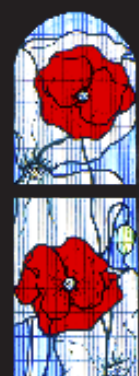
These are the local men who died in the Great War, 100 years ago this month.

Guardsman Albert George Hawkins, of Chesterton.

Died: 11th April 1915 Aged: 20 Served in: Grenadier Guards

Private Thomas Robert Dale, of Upper Heyford.

Died: 14th April 1915 Aged: 37 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry



Talks Update

Over the next few months we have a varied itinerary of talks that we hope will prove very interesting.

Monday 20th April

Dr Rowena Archer discusses **Travelling in the Middle Ages**. How much people travelled and where they went during the mediaeval period. It includes some material on the logistics (roads and bridges etc) and some stories of great journeys.

Monday 18th May

Mark Davies explores the social histories of **Oxford's Historic Waterways**. The River Thames is the very reason for Oxford's existence and name. Whilst the Oxford Canal was one of Britain's first four 18th century trunk canals.

Monday 15th June

Liz Woolley talks on **Leisure & Entertainment in Victorian and Edwardian Oxford**. Describing how Oxford's citizens spent their free time, and how the middle classes attempted to impose 'rational recreation' on their working-class contemporaries.

The History of the English Parish

Chairman Bob Hessian started the meeting and introduced the speaker, Chris Day, to talk about the History of the English Parish.

Chris explained that in the 11th century it was seen to be



beneficial, for the collection of taxes, to have smaller areas of land, each under the manor.

Many churches were being built then and they became the centre of the parish community. The annual tradition of beating the boundaries was started then and is still practiced now, on Rogation Day, in some parishes.

The church was the safest place to store valuables, including the parish records of baptisms, marriages and burials, which were usually kept in a parish chest (right).

Roads became a parish responsibility so villagers were each required to do about four days unpaid work per year on repairs.

Each parish had a constable (left), who was independent of



the church and the manor.

The vestry formed the administration centre for the care of the poor and vagrants, as required by the Poor Law of 1601. Mothers with illegitimate children were often put into the local workhouse.

In 1888 many parish boundaries were realigned to correspond with local land ownership.

At the end of the talk questions were taken from the floor and the chairman thanked the speaker.

- Peter Crook

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