



# First Visit of a Reigning Monarch



Fifty years ago on Monday 10th May 1965 people came from miles around and queued for hours in the town centre, waiting for the Visit of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and His Royal Highness, Prince Philip.

Glorious sunshine glinting on the gay decorations transformed the Market Square into a fairyland of anticipation and splendour. As the royal party arrived the huge crowd surged forward, flag-waving and cheering. Windows above ground level were packed as people bunched tightly together, eager to get a gallery view.

The weeks of planning and preparation for the visit were justly rewarded. The town was gaily festooned with flags and bunting and local shops were resplendent in their red, white and blue decorations. Bicester took the day off. It was a day to be proud of, a day to be remembered.

The visit started at Bicester Central Ordnance Depot where, at 11am, the Queen received the Royal Salute from

the Guard of Honor mounted by the 46 Bn. RAOC. Then, riding in an open Land Rover, the Queen was given a tour of the depot which was undergoing a £2.5m redevelopment. They then proceeded through Ambrosden, where the roads were lined by military families and schoolchildren, and on to Graven Hill, where displays of service clothing, fire fighting equipment and air drop equipment were exhibited. Prince Philip closely inspected the 20lbs of metal left from guns used in the Crimea War which is now used for the manufacture of the Victoria Cross. Then the depot visit ended with a stop at the Officers' Mess.

The royal car arrived at the Market Square a few minutes later than expected. It had been previously announced that the Queen and Prince Philip would not have time to speak with the councillors who were presented, but to the delight of the huge crowd the time schedule went by the wayside and the Royal Visitors chatted and joked



with fifty councillors and senior officers. Prince Philip made another of his light-hearted comments, to ease the strain of the long line of handshakes, when he asked Councillor Mears, a railway engine driver, what happened to the tea making since the changeover from steam to diesel?

The Queen and Prince Philip then signed portraits, which were to be hung in the council chambers of Bicester and Ploughley Councils. They also signed the visitors' books for both councils.

The final stage of the royal visit was lunch at RAF Bicester. Leaving the Market Square the royal car drove slowly along Sheep Street and St John's Street, where the gathered crowd of schoolchildren from Bicester and other areas waved their Union Jacks and cheered as the royal party drove by.

The pen used by the Queen to sign her portrait for Bicester Urban District Council was presented to the town by Mr F.T.J. Hudson JP, Chairman of the Bicester Magistrates. Prince Philip used his own pen on the occasion, remarking that he did not like using any other.

- Matthew Hathaway



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## Dates For Your Diary

St Edburg's Foundation St Albans Trip	16th May
Oxford's Historic Waterways Talk	18th May - 7:30pm
June Newsletter Submissions Deadline	29th May
Bicester's Big Lunch	7th June
Leisure and Entertainment Talk	15th June - 7:30pm

# Chairman's Ramblings

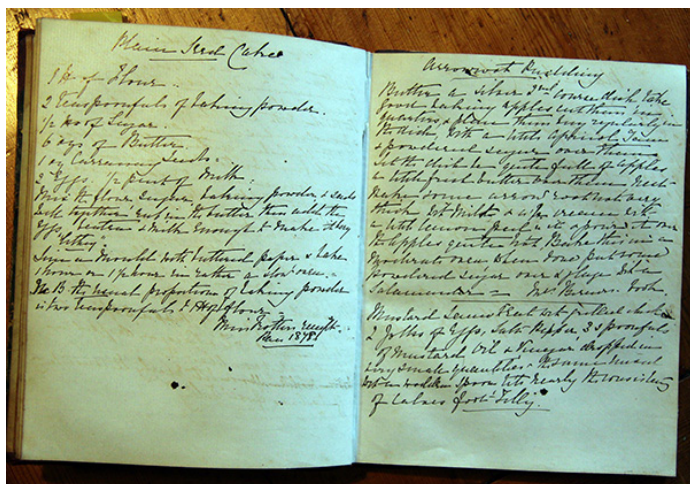
I think I've mentioned before the "wooden box" purchased at a local auction in 1981 by my wife – "to put the children's toys in". The box had come from Bicester House, following the death of Mrs Margaret Coker and was full of family papers – mostly from Margaret's side of the family (the Mirrlees and the Moncrieffs). Her brother, William, served with some distinction in the 1st World War and the box contained much correspondence from that period and the "letters from the trenches" will form the basis of a later talk.

The Moncrieff family I've traced back to William Moncrieff, a church minister at Alloa, Scotland in 1729. Through a line of marriages, all documented, I've been able to trace a great, great granddaughter, Emily Lina Moncrieff who, in the late 1800's, married a William J Mirrlees. They had three children: William Henry Buchanan Mirrlees, Helen Hope Mirrlees and Margaret Rosalys Mirrlees – it was Margaret who married Major Lewis Aubrey Coker and lived in Bicester House.

Mr Mirrlees owned sugar plantations in South Africa and there were records of the crop yields and much business correspondence. He also went into an enterprise in Argentina that looked at using a sugar derivative (Natalite – composed of ether and alcohol) as an additive to car fuel. All the details of his experiments were there and the results – all this in the 1920's.

The family were great travellers – remember they had to get to Argentina and South Africa, by sea. There's a very detailed account of them leaving Liverpool in September 1885 and travelling on the RMS Britannia from England to Australia. The box contained a "diary" of over 200 pages of hand-written notes, some by Mr and some by Mrs Mirrlees, of their trip. There are detailed comments as to life on board the ship, the people they met and also the places they visit en route, Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said, Suez Canal, India, etc. For example, the entry for Tuesday Sept 25th 1885 reads:

*"This was a very exciting day as we reached Gibraltar. We had been looking forward to it very much but I am afraid that when I heard Will's voice at 5.30 to say it was time to get up, I felt inclined to leave Gibraltar alone and sleep on in peace. The next excitement was to get on shore. The boat was surrounded by boats rowed by Spaniards – dark, but not as I had expected, very handsome. I find my ideas being upturned on every hand. I had always had a romantic admiration for the Spaniards and I am sorry to*



*confess I found them nasty, dirty and worse than all, plain!"*

The family spent much time in South Africa, where Mrs Mirrlees collected recipes. The box contained a large envelope of recipes written on scraps of paper, but also a hard-back note book containing over 100 recipes, all hand written, dating back to 1886.

I did start to transcribe some of them – but the handwriting in the book is difficult to read! But recently I discovered that Mrs Coker and her mother had published many of these in 1949 in a book entitled "Wishful Cooking". The recipe book is an interesting insight into the society in which they lived and associated. Mrs Coker has included a bibliography of the people who contributed to the recipe book – they include:

*Mrs Baldwin (wife of Air-Marshall J Baldwin), Lady Bicester, Lady Darwin (wife of Sir George Darwin – son of Charles), Mary Pope (well known Theosophist and strict vegetarian), Mrs Pattison (wife of Frederick Hope Pattison, last living Waterloo officer, and great grandmother of Mrs Coker) and Tom Donald (old friend of Mrs Mirrlees and famous bon viveur in Glasgow!).*

However, my favourite reads as follows:

*Ellen Anderson, cook to H.M.P. Moncrieff in Edinburgh, 1905-11. Cook to E.L. Mirrlees in Cambridge, 1911-15. Lent to Mrs Butler of Trinity Lodge, Cambridge to cook for H.M. King George V during Army manoeuvres, 1911.*

Nothing like a bit of name dropping!!!

I've picked out two recipes that caught my eye:

## Nettle Toast:

Toast slices of bread. On each put a pile of well boiled, strained and seasoned nettles. Make a hole in the centre of each and put in a raw egg. Over the egg place a rasher of bacon and put under the griller; the fat from the bacon cooks the egg.

## Brussel Sprout Balls:

Choose little hard sprouts. Wash well, put into boiling water with a teaspoonful of salt, and boil for 10 minutes. Drain well and dry in a soft cloth.

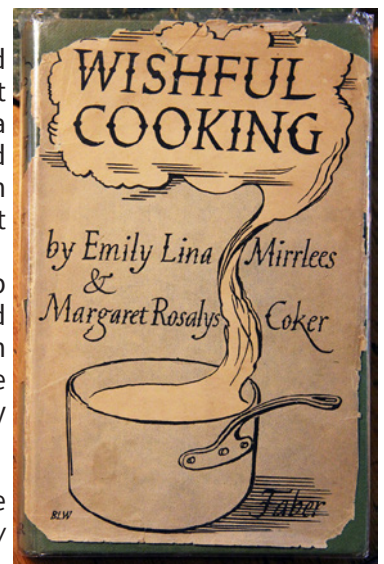
Roll in flour, dip them in beaten egg and breadcrumbs, and then fry in boiling fat. Sprinkle a little chopped parsley over and serve at once.

I'll save the recipe entitled "Thin Yellow Boys" for another time!

## Now it's your turn: Recipes wanted

As part of our 30th Anniversary celebrations next year, we'd like to put together a booklet of recipes collected by our members – if there's a story that associates them with Bicester then so much the better. Please send your recipes to Sally or pass them directly to one of the committee members at one of our meetings.

- Bob Hessian



# Quick Quiz

Where are these places? - No prizes, just a bit of fun.



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

## Sunday Brunch Scramble

The fire-engine had a good day out on the 26th April at Bicester Heritage's 5th Sunday Brunch Scramble. We even had a good colour match with the adjacent Jaguar! Many thanks to rest of the fire-crew who were in attendance – Geoff Miles, Peter Crook and Dave Pearse.



**HAWKINS, 12 Sheep Street** Tel: 5 and 130.

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**FETE**  
(By kind permission of Edg. and Mrs. Hodgson)

BOWLING FOR FIG. . . . LADIES' BOWLING . . . DARTS  
 AIR-GUN SHOOTING . . . TREASURE HUNT  
 POINT RIDING . . . RACING FOR CHILDREN . . . SWING  
 STEPPING THE CHAIN . . . AUCTION SALE, etc.  
 REFRESHMENTS. . . . CYCLES STORED

Entrance 6d.

Dancing on the Lawn (if wet in the Manor Barn)  
 Proceeds to aid of the Village Hall Fund.

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SUNBEAM . . . HUDSON . . . DAIMLER

Adverts taken from Bicester Advertiser - May 1945



Bicester was not behind any town in its decorations for VE-Day. From 3pm on Monday 7th May 1945 householders began to hang out flags and put up streamers, many across the streets.

Thousands of troops from the neighbouring camps came into the town on Tuesday and there was a deep feeling of joy throughout the day.

In the evening there were services of thanksgiving in the Parish Church, the Congregational Church, the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The Urban District Council attended the service at the Parish Church, on the bells of which several peals were rung during the day.

At dusk considerable enthusiasm prevailed. Fireworks were discharged, and there were displays at the camps. A bonfire was lit on the Market Square, and street dancing was freely indulged in here, as well as at the junction of Sheep Street and St John's Street, where a piano had been brought out, and outside The Star, Highfield, where music was supplied by Star Sound System (Mr C. Clifton). The proceedings lasted until the early hours of Wednesday morning.

On Wednesday it was more of an ordinary holiday. A party of about 30 evacuee children were entertained in the afternoon to tea in the Eclipse Mineral Water yard, by Mrs Solomon. Otherwise little exuberance was manifest until late in the evening, when there were bonfires in Sheep Street and the Market Square, and open-air dancing in various parts of the town.

On the following Saturday Bicester's jollification's were continued with a nighttime programme arranged

by Councillor J. Leach. Dancing first took place on the Market Square, with spasmodic fireworks. A procession was formed, headed by torchlights, with a large number of adults and children in fancy dress, and a "rag-time" band which had been hurriedly collected by Mr L.T. Evans, who acted as drum major. The bandsmen were all in fancy dress, and produced a lot of noise and fun but very little tune from a variety of instruments which included, a cornet, trombone, combs, tin lids, whistles, cymbals, etc.

An effigy of Hitler was conveyed round in Mr H. Hawtin's lorry. And on returning to the Market Square after having paraded the town via King's End, New Road, North Street, Sheep Street and Priory Road, the effigy of Hitler was burnt on the bonfire, which lasted for several hours. Dancing was again indulged in until midnight, when a night of revelry and fun was brought to a close.

During the evening Councillor Plater, Chairman of the Urban Council, called for three cheers for the Royal Family and for those men and women who made victory possible, and these were very heartily given.

Mr L. Hawkins very kindly gave oranges to all children under 10.

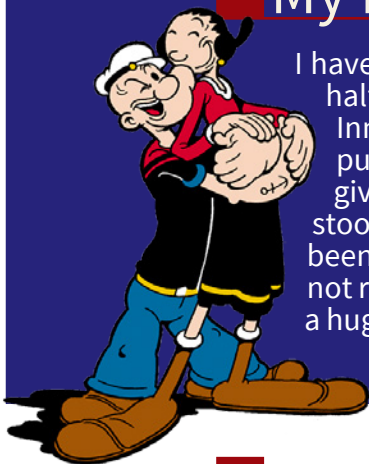
In the middle of the celebrations several lorry loads of liberated prisoners of war passed through the Square on their way from the Westcott landing ground to a rest centre, and were given a hearty welcome by the large crowd.

The whole of the week's celebrations were carried out in a most happy way, and the Police are to be congratulated on the great tact they used throughout.



Children's street party outside The Star, Highfield - 8th May 1945

## My Memories Brian Clifton



I have been struggling to remember the VE Day celebrations as I was only six and a half years old at the time. My father, Harry Clifton, was the landlord of The Star Inn at Highfield and I think there was a children's party outside the front of the pub with further tables set up in the beer cellar. I remember my father had been given a plywood cut-out of Popeye the Sailor by the Regal Cinema and 'he' was stood up in front of the pub. I imagine all the food and drink for the children had been given by local people, even though there was still strict food rationing. I can not remember when we first had fireworks after the days of blackout, but there was a huge bonfire on the Market Square and in Highfield children carried torches which we made by fixing a tin can to a stick and lighting an oily rag inside it.

- Brian Clifton

## Marj's Memories VE Day

I was just 10 years old. I remember well the anticipation over the days before. Children were always quiet when the news was read on the radio.

The war in Europe was over and everyone was ready to celebrate. Victory in Japan came a few months later.

The Star in Highfield arranged a party at short notice. You can see from the picture on the previous page that it was very basic – some sitting on beer crates. I think we had sandwiches and a drink. I'm on the extreme left with Margaret Barker next to me. I can still name most of the people.

There was a Fancy Dress competition, a hard task for mums at that time. I was dressed as a Gypsy in long clothes, cocoa on my face and a baby (my doll) strapped by a scarf on my back and I carried a basket of handmade wooden flowers and pegs. The gypsies used to sell these flowers and pegs at the door.

I think the celebrations were possibly spread over

some days. So I can't say the sequence of them, but I have a vivid memory of going down into Bicester town one evening with my friend (both dressed as gypsies) and it was heaving with uniformed soldiers and airmen, both English and American and they were pitching money into our baskets – we felt so lucky. It seemed that the whole population of Bicester turned out.

There was a parade and an effigy of Hitler on some wooden steps in front of The Angel Pub. Later it was burned on a bonfire in the Market Square.

More celebration followed at The Star. There was music and dancing on the forecourt of the pub in the evening; it was crowded and everyone seemed to be merry. That's when I learnt my first grown up dance with my soldier uncle – "Hands, Knees and Bumps a Daisy"!

One night soon after, my mother took me "to see the lights" – she was referring to the lights in the windows of the houses, without blackout blinds.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

## Bygone Bicester

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

### 5th May 1865

**PEDESTRIANISM** - On Friday last an amateur walking match of 50 miles, to be completed in 12 hours, was hastily got up to prove an untried and untrained amateur in Bicester, named Holloway. The course was from the George Inn, Bicester, to the second mile mark on the Banbury Road, returning to the starting place, making a 4 mile lap. He commenced at 4 o'clock in the morning and did the first five laps, a distance of 20 miles, in 3 hours and 55 minutes. He accomplished the remaining 30 miles to the great astonishment, not only of his supporters, but of all persons present, in 7 hours 1 minute. Completing the whole distance of 50 miles in 10 hours 56 minutes, including stoppages.

### 14th May 1915

**STRAYING GELDING** - Harry Smith, dealer, Bicester, was summoned before the Petty Sessions for allowing a gelding to stray on the Bucknell Road. The defendant pleaded guilty.

PC Palmer said he was on duty between the Workhouse and the Waterworks when he found the gelding straying on the highway. He caught it and took it

down to the town, shutting it up in a stable. The gelding was afterwards found to be the defendant's.

Smith, in defence, said he had not bought the animal above an hour. He took it into the yard formerly occupied by Mr Carpenter, and after tying it up went to have his tea. Whilst he was having it, his sister went to him and said, "The policeman has got your pony." He went and found that it had been straying.

A fine of 2s 6d, inclusive of costs, was imposed.

### 21st May 1965

**ANOTHER CLUB BREAK-IN** - Another Bicester club was raided on Monday night, the latest in a spate of break-ins following one at the Ashton Club last Wednesday and at the Ex-Servicemen's Club a few weeks before. This time it was the Highfield Social Club and the thieves left a note. "Thanks for the rum."

They helped themselves to the jackpot by smashing a fruit machine, which contained about £5 in sixpences.

Some cigarettes were stolen. Then they helped themselves to a drink at the bar where they left the note. But this time they went too far, because they left some other things unintentionally.

# Election Fever

Back in May 1965, the same week as the Queen's visit to Bicester, the local council elections took place. But it seems that fifty years on nothing much has changed. The Bicester Advertiser at the time reported that:

"Thursday, May 13th will be a red letter day in the history of Bicester. The local council elections will, for a change, be keenly fought. A new era in Local Government is looming, and the electorate, which in the past was ignominiously lethargic, is taking a new interest in the everyday running of their town. After all, the electorate have had plenty to think about - railway closures, the Nest Egg, rates, rents, street market, car parks, swimming pool, community centre, housing repairs, new estates, Old Place Yard Development, private residential development, gas producing plant and new industries. And, for the future, keen representation is required for compatible discussions with County Planning, who have chosen Bicester as the town most suitable for expansion."

The candidates up for election then were:



**Mr John Hollis** (Ind)  
1,757 votes  
Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and vice-chairman of the Council. An independent candidate supported by the BEA. Known to express his opinion very forcibly and stand firm for his convictions.



**Mr Tudor Jones** (BEA)  
1,510 votes  
A schoolteacher at Steeple Aston. Well known for his Socialist views, he was one of the candidates put forward by the Bicester Electors' Association. He was a trustee of the Bicester Sports Ground and chairman of the Ground Management Committee.



**Mr Clifford Nash** (BEA)  
1,482 votes  
A grocer and baker with a shop at Ambrosden. He lived at 10 Field Street and was the Bicester Electors' Association's second candidate. Secretary of the local Liberal Party and Chairman of Bicester Group British Legion.



**Mr Ian Goble** (Ind)  
1,308 votes  
Well known to the electorate, having been a member of Bicester Council for many years. He was chairman of the Council in 1953, 1955 and 1963.



**Mr Sidney Winterbone** (Lab)  
967 votes  
A member of Bicester Council for many years and a County Councillor. A Labour member and trade unionist.



**Mrs R. H. Hallam** (Lab)  
822 votes  
Member of many local and national associations. She was seeking re-election to continue her fight for a new swimming pool, amongst other things, for the town.



**Mr Leslie Blackman** (Lab)  
531 votes  
A Sunday School teacher and Youth Leader in the Bicester Methodist Church. His main interests were in youth work and international peace through the closer understanding of all races.



**Mr William Johnston** (Lab)  
506 votes  
He had lived in Bicester for 20 years and was employed as a driver at Morris Motors, where he was also shop steward. Interested in sport, he used to play in goal for Bicester Town.

Winterbone, Hallam, Blackman and Johnston were not voted onto the Council. Consequently Councillors Winterbone and Hallam both lost the seats they already had in favour of the two new BEA candidates, leaving a council made up of 9 Independents and 3 Labour.

# Walks and Outings

We have a number of village and countryside walks planned for this summer, as well as a few outings. Specific details for each, including times, costs and meeting places, will be circulated nearer the time, but the programme is as follows:

**Souldern Village Walk** - Led by Bob Hessian  
Sunday 14th June

**Souldern Countryside Walk** - Led by John Roberts  
Sunday 21st June

**Marlborough Trip**  
Wednesday 24th June

**Meadow Farm Visit**  
Sunday 28th June



**King's Sutton Village Walk** - Led by Martin Greenwood

Sunday 12th July

**King's Sutton Countryside Walk** - Led by John Roberts

Sunday 26th July

## Roll of Honour

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

**Bombardier Joseph Bowerman**, native of Islip.

Died: 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 38      Served in: Royal Horse Artillery

**Sergeant George Cooling**, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 28      Served in: Royal Berkshire Regiment

**Captain Ernest Dashwood**, of Kirtlington.

Died: 12<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 35      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Captain Geoffrey Bowlby**, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 13<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 32      Served in: Royal Horse Guards

**Private Cyril Turney**, of 1 Priory Terrace, Bicester.

Died: 13<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 18      Served in: 11th Hussars

**Captain Guy Bonham-Carter**, of Bicester.

Died: 15<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 30      Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

**Private Arthur Bannister**, of Bicester.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 34      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Joseph Baughan**, of 16 St John's Street, Bicester.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 33      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Archibald Clifford**, native of Finmere.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 34      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Arthur Cox**, of The Nut Tree, Murcott.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 24      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**2nd Lieutenant Lionel Dashwood**, of Kirtlington.

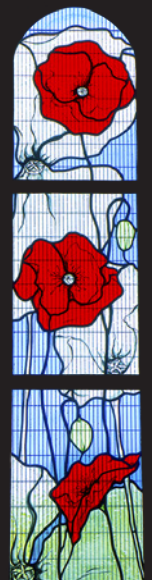
Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 27      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private James Hurst**, of Arccott.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915      Aged: 22      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Arthur Coppock**, of Bicester.

Died: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1915      Aged: 26      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 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.

## Monday 20th July

Martin Way explores the work of the Home Front during World War 2 in his talk **Tin Helmets & Gas Masks**. Discussing the civilians' support for the military, the mobilisation of women, rationing etc. Illustrated with an array of interesting artefacts.

# Travelling in the Middle Ages

On Monday 20th April, Dr Rowena Archer gave us an interesting insight into 'Travelling in the Middle Ages'. Rowena immediately dispelled the myth that people didn't travel in the Middle Ages: they did, and in quite considerable numbers, too. A surprising fact since there weren't any real maps, roads weren't properly maintained, and there were very limited modes of transport. In fact in 1096, a hundred thousand people from France, Germany and Italy made the mass pilgrimage by foot to the Holy Land.

Maintaining roads was looked upon as a charity, with people leaving money for this purpose in their wills. Bridges were important, but again depended heavily on charity for their upkeep.

'Pontage' was the medieval toll levied for the building or repair of bridges.

As today, roadworks were the bane of people's lives. The maintenance of roads was chiefly the responsibility of the locality, which involved endless legislation to keep roads open and in a decent state. Rowena cited an Aylesbury miller who dispatched his servants to dig clay from a



nearby highway, to help repair his property. This extensive digging left a massive hole in the road, which then became flooded. One evening a glover with his cart travelled along the road, fell into the pit and drowned. Amazingly, the miller was not prosecuted, since it was deemed that he was entitled to obtain the clay for the maintenance of his property.

Finally, we learned that all-inclusive holidays are not a modern concept. It appears the Venetians of the Middle Ages can claim this initiative. They organised 'one-price-covers-everything' pilgrimages, which included the costs of the journey, the berth, the horses, the donkeys, and all food. What's more, they offered a choice of different departure dates.

- Sally Dexter

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