

All Change at Bicester



Bicester London Road Station - 1961

The newly rebuilt railway station in London Road is due to open later this month, together with the renovated line from the new Oxford Parkway station up to the new link with the Chiltern line from London Marylebone. But 50 years ago, it was facing closure.

Although the station, and the rest of the Varsity Line, didn't finally close until 1st January 1968, the plans were first announced in 1965, to a public outcry. On the 14th July 1965 the Minister of Transport gave his consent to British Railways' request for the withdrawal of passenger services between Oxford, Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge. He stated that he accepted the Consultative Committee's view that hardship in the affected areas would be alleviated by improvements in the existing bus services and by the provision of the additional bus services that they proposed. He also stated that the closure would not take place until all the necessary bus service arrangements had been made.

The Oxford branch of the National Union of Railwaymen voiced the opinions of the public at large in a protest telegram they sent to the Minister of Transport on

the 19th July 1965. They wrote that "among other hardships the bus service cannot adequately take the place of the railway. Extra trains were put on the line to cope with the increase of passengers. We ask the Minister to rescind his decision to accede with the promise given by the Labour Party at the General Election. The Oxford branch of the NUR feel that if the railway service is replaced by a bus service

it will mean longer journeys and higher bus fares. They also feel that with the crew shortage on the buses and the congestion on the roads the buses cannot adequately take the place of the train service."

After the closure in 1968 the line was still used for freight traffic, particularly to and from the Army's Ordnance Depot at Graven Hill and Arncott. And the Oxford to Bicester stretch of the line was eventually reopened to passenger traffic by Network SouthEast on 11th May 1987. It then stayed open (under various operators) until February last year, when the current upgrade works began.

- Matthew Hathaway



New station building under construction - 2015

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Dates For Your Diary

Oxfordshire on the Home Front Talk
19th October - 7:30pm
see page 6

November Newsletter Submissions Deadline
4th September

Putting Bicester on the Map Talk
16th November - 7:30pm
see page 6

Marj's Memories The Wireless

It would be hard for young people today to imagine life without technology. In the forties and fifties, the only telephones we had were in a red telephone box down the street. But, we did have a "wireless".

The news was on every hour.

Church Services on a Sunday, morning and evening – you could sometimes hear people singing along with the hymns as they cooked the Sunday roast.

The Billy Cotton Band Show was on Sunday Lunchtime. It began with a loud voice saying "Wakey Wakey".

Then later in the evening a serial was read, such as Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre or the Forsyth Saga.

On Monday night was a programme called "Monday Night at Eight"; it started with a ditty:

It's Monday night at eight o'clock

Oh can't you hear the chimes

It's telling you to take an easy chair

And settle by the fireside – get out your Radio Times

For Monday night at eight is on the air.

It was packed with interesting subjects, such as: a serial; a quiz; a mystery voice and a deliberate mistake. Families would debate it afterwards, to get the answers.

Children's Hour was at tea time during the week with Toy Town.

Dick Barton, Special Agent was on at 6.45 every week night: the streets cleared when the children ran in to hear this detective thriller with Dick Barton and

his colleagues Snowy and Jock.

Paul Temple was on a Wednesday (another thriller) which always ended in suspense and we had to wait a week to hear the outcome.

Ted and Barbara Andrews had a programme and little Julie would sing with them (what a star she became).

Norman Evans in "Over the Garden Wall" made everyone laugh.

Arthur Askey with his daughter Anthea. He sang a wonderful version of "The Bee".

Woman's Hour was on during the weekday afternoons with useful hints and interesting topics.

Saturday teatime - football results – a lot of people would be checking their coupons!

Saturday Night - "In Town Tonight" and you had the feel of being in London; with background music; you could hear the newspapers being sold and a female voice could be heard selling flowers "Violets buy my lovely violets".

I can't mention them all, but just a taste of how it was. Our imagination put the faces to the voices. We knew the words to all the modern songs and the names of the singers.

What a lot of pleasure came to the whole family from that wonderful wireless that stood on the dresser.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

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

6th October 1865

DAMAGING A GARDEN — Mark Welch, of Kirtlington, was charged by PC Thomas Hawtin with having committed wilful damage in his garden to the amount of 1s. Defendant did not appear.

PC Diamond proved service of summons. PC Hawtin proved that he saw him in the garden knocking walnuts off a tree, and in so doing he trod upon some potatoes and damaged other property. It was about half-past six o'clock in the morning.

Defendant was fined 21s with costs 11s and damage 2s, or 21 days imprisonment.

The money was paid.

15th October 1915

THE HARVEST AT THE WORKHOUSE — The usual service in thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest was held on Sunday morning in the chapel of the workhouse.

The edifice was tastefully decorated with choice flowers, such as white geraniums, chrysanthemums and roses. There was a plentiful supply of fruit, vegetables, grapes, etc grown in the grounds.

The Rev. W O'Reilly, conducted the service. Mrs Palmer, of Rose Cottage, very kindly supplied cake for the inmates tea, which gift was especially appreciated.

1st October 1965

BICESTER CHILDREN DIG UP 35 YEAR OLD MYSTERY - When Mr and Mrs Eric McShea, of 202 Buckingham Crescent, went on holiday to Hunstanton to get away from it all they didn't reckon on their three children digging up a thirty five year old mystery.



Mr McShea's three children, Anne (11), Colin (10) and Helen (8) (pictured above) were digging in the sand when they found a silver medal. He cleaned the medal and discovered the following inscription on the back. "Miss Beryl Bonner on Sweet William, Best Child's Pony, Brackley 1930."

Miss Bonner is now, of course, Mrs Ancil, of Chesterton, and when she called at Booths Garage, where Mr McShea is employed, she was surprised to be asked if she ever had a horse called "Sweet William".

She was surprised to see the medal and said afterwards "I've never been to Hunstanton."

Mrs Ancil was a well known horsewoman and has many awards and prizes from those days.

Tel. Bicester 5. **HAWKINS** 29, SHEEP STREET BICESTER
CAN OFFER FROM A LIMITED SUPPLY OF

SEED POTATOES CLASS E.1
Scotch Seed from 15/6 cwt.
Majestic, King Edward, Epicure, Arran Banner, Sharpes Express, Eolipae, etc.

(once grown from Scotch Seed) **11/6** PER OWT.

Telephone Bicester 23 **ROWN INEMA** BICESTER A. TILL, Proprietor

SUNDAY NEXT. At 7 p.m. **O.K. FOR SOUND** (U) Also **Halwaie Nights** (U)

MONDAY, 21st APRIL. **Carol Lombard and Brian Aberne** in **VIGIL OF THE NIGHT** (A) Also **Full Supporting Programme.**

THURSDAY, 24th APRIL. **Bing Crosby and Gloria Jean** in **IF I HAD MY WAY** (U) Also **Double BILL** (A)

HEDGES' HOME DRESSMAKING FABRICS

Horrocks PRINTS & DRESS FABRICS. Splendid Selection, floral and plain shades, from 1/6.

Novello, Nucolain, Caribrooke, 1/11.

Ladies' COTTON DRESSES, pretty floral shades, W., W.X., O.S., E.X.O.S., 8/11, 10/11, 12/11, 14/11.

HEDGES CORNER SHOPPE, BICESTER

Adverts taken from the Bicester Advertiser - April 1941

Prisoners of War

We recently received some interesting photographs from one of our members, Sue Dawson, who's father, Fred Proctor, was in charge of German and Italian prisoners of war during the Second World War. They were working the land and growing produce at Graven Hill and Windmill Camp, as well as elsewhere in the county. And when the weather was too bad to work the land they were sent to chop wood, basically to keep them busy. Unfortunately we don't know where exactly these photographs were taken, but we suspect it was at Graven Hill.



A group of prisoners of war



Harvesting the crops



Fred Proctor in the centre, harvesting the crop with two prisoners



Loading the trailer ready to take to the collection centre



Fred standing to the left of the tractor outside the "Collecting Centre"

AGM Report

After last year's minutes had been recapped and approved Bob Hessian proceeded to give his Chairman's report, detailing key points from the past year:

2014/15 had proved another good year of interesting talks with some excellent speakers. Thanks were given to John Roberts and Sally James for organising the year's programme of talks. Thanks were also given to John for organising this year's village and countryside walks, based around Souldern and Kings Sutton.

Three outings had also been arranged for the year. In June, the Society visited the nature reserve at Meadow Farm near Blackthorn. Also in June, a return visit to Marlborough was organised. Both of these events had proved successful and enjoyable. The final outing of the year took place in July, with a trip to the Energy Recovery Facility at Ardley. An unusual outing for the Society, but it was extremely well supported with over thirty members attending.

For the St Edburg's Xmas Tree Festival we took on a World War One theme. Facsimile 'death plaques' for each of the local service people who died in World War One were produced, and hung on branches with medal ribbons. Many favourable comments were received, and the tree remained in the Church over the Xmas period.

BLHS took part in Bicester's Big Lunch event on 7th June 2015. We took the opportunity to try out the newly-purchased display boards, and to ask people to select their favourite photographs for inclusion in the 2016 BLHS calendar.

The two main projects BLHS have been working on in 2014/15 are the DVD on 'Bicester's Buildings' and the 'Town Trail and Map'. It is hoped that the trail will be available by the end of the year and filming for the DVD will start early in 2016.

The Society is currently taking advice on how to best preserve the Cholera Stone in St Edburg's churchyard and how the story of the cholera outbreak in the town could be told.

The newsletter, Bicester Historian, was launched in September 2014, and has probably been the success story of the year. Thanks were given to its editor, Matthew Hathaway, as well as Gill King and regular contributor Marj Dean. The Newsletter is for all members, so please feel free to contribute anything you'd like to include.

2016 sees the 30th Anniversary of the formation of BLHS, and the Society wishes to commemorate this occasion. An Anniversary calendar for 2016 has already been produced and all members will receive a complimentary copy. To mark the anniversary we will also be organising a history exhibition in the summer.

There are a number of other projects the Society is working on or planning to do. These include a 'Street Names' book (thanks were given to Andy Taylor for his

work on this so far). The logbooks from St Edburg's School have come to light and we'd like to do something with those. The website is seriously in need of updating. And we want to mark the centenary of World War One. This may involve producing a small publication or an exhibition linked to the war. There is also every intention to organise some guided walks around Bicester focusing on the war itself and how it affected the town and its people.

Last year, the Society tried to amend the local plan in order to protect the ancient meadows and hedgerows near Gavray Drive. Disappointingly, this proved unsuccessful. Now, land associated with the deserted medieval village of Wretchwick is under threat, and Langford Village Community Association have asked BLHS for help. In addition, BLHS have been invited to comment on new dwellings and associated outbuildings at D & E Sites on Graven Hill. To date, any representation made has been on behalf of the Committee, not the whole Society. This raises the issue of how involved the Society should be on such matters, and whether it should be engaging with the whole membership in order to give a Society view, not just a Committee view. Further discussion on this topic is a pressing requirement.

Finding a suitable permanent storage area for the archive material that we have amassed is a top priority for the Committee and the Society. Many thanks were extended to our Archivist, Gill King, for her detailed and tireless work on the archive.

A plea for assistance from members was made, in order to help the Society fulfil some or all of its hopes and aspirations. A Volunteers' Evening will be organised soon, which will give more information on the current projects on the Society's 'wish list', and give members an opportunity to see if they could assist with specific tasks. There are still vacancies on the committee for a Secretary and a Publicity Officer.

The Treasurer, Sally James, then gave her report:

The Society was in a favourable position regarding its accounts. The principal outlays of the year had been for the printing of the calendars and the two banners (the banners funded by a Town Council grant). The Society had also subsidised this year's programme of walks and outings. Speaker costs have risen by £90 compared to last year. Sales of the DVD have been particularly healthy, with 80 copies being sold to Cole's Bookshop.

The Society had a total of 94 members last year, and we hope to increase this figure in the 30th anniversary year. Thanks were given to John Roberts for his work as Membership Officer.

The AGM closed at 8:20pm, and was followed by the raffle. Then, after refreshments, Bill King gave a talk on Archaeology in your Shed, Garage or Attic.

Roll of Honour

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

Private Frederick John Sansom, of Bicester.

Died: 9th October 1915 Aged: 21 Served in: Grenadier Guards

Private Ellis Jones, of Islip.

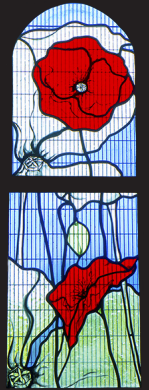
Died: 15th October 1915 Aged: 36 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Driver Frederick James King, native of Islip.

Died: 19th October 1915 Aged: 26 Served in: Royal Horse Artillery

2nd Lieutenant Eustace Edward Lovett Phillips, of Caversfield House.

Died: 30th October 1915 Aged: 21 Served in: Royal Berkshire Regiment



Village History Caversfield

Caversfield, a small village on the northern edge of Bicester, was, until 1844, part of an exclave of Buckinghamshire.

Before the Norman Conquest the manor of Caversfield was held by one Edward, who was a man of Tostig Godwinson, Earl of Northumbria. The Domesday Book records that in 1086 it was one of the manors owned by William de Warenne, 1st Earl of Surrey. William's descendants retained Caversfield until the beginning of the 14th century.

By the 12th century the Gargate family held the feudal tenancy of Caversfield. In 1236 Muriel de Ros and Isabel de Munbury, the daughters of Hugh Gargate, endowed the tenancy of half of the manor to the Augustinian Priory at Bicester. The priory retained this holding until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537. The Gargate



family is recorded to have owned a watermill, a windmill and a house where the manorial court was held, though no evidence of these structures survives today.

The oldest part of the parish church of St Laurence is the Saxon base of the bell tower, which probably dates from the 10th century. The nave and chancel were rebuilt late in the 12th century. Early in the 13th century the chancel was remodelled again in the Early English Gothic style with two lancet windows at its

east end, and the bell-stage of the tower was either added or rebuilt. Small north and south aisles were added around the same time but these were demolished in the 18th century and later rebuilt in 1874.

The churchyard includes 25 Commonwealth War Graves connected with RAF Bicester, all dating from before and during the Second World War. This was a training station for Bomber Command and a number of the burials are of airmen killed in training accidents. 19 are RAF airmen, including one Australian and one Canadian serving in the RAF. Four are RCAF airmen, one is from the RNZAF and one is a soldier from the Royal Artillery.

- Matthew Hathaway



Talks Update

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

Monday 19th October

Stephen Barker tells us about **Oxfordshire on the Home Front 1914-18**. Explaining the impact of the First World War on the county. Focusing on many aspects, from fundraising to munitions production and the influx of Belgian refugees.

Monday 16th November

John Leighfield explains the development of maps from Gough to Google in his talk: **Putting Bicester on the Map**. Covering all the key stages and people from the first Oxfordshire map by Christopher Saxton in 1574 to the present day.

Monday 21st December

We round off 2015 with a **festive social event**.

Industrial Archaeology in your Shed

Industrial archaeology is described as the evidence of man's past through material remains. Included in the study of industrial archaeology are the physical elements of landscape and buildings; social history, which records the impact of changes, and artefacts.



From early times, the development of tools and weapons utilized natural materials and marked the beginnings of organised society, requiring communication and collaboration to survive. Man-made structures such as Silbury Hill (pictured) and Stonehenge are major pieces of work by large groups of people working together.

Each era can be defined by the materials and technologies which were developed. For example, the Middle Ages saw the introduction of water power; iron founding is associated with the Tudors and coal & gas with the Victorians.



The introduction of each new technology enabled improvements in health and life expectancy resulting in population growth and increased mobility, education and property ownership. Significant developments include the wheel, which gave us mobility, and weights & measures which ensured uniformity.

The talk was illustrated with images of a wide range of items which people are likely to have around their homes including tools, implements, appliances, devices and toys.



- Sally James

Committee & Contacts

Editor:

Matthew Hathaway
mathat298@gmail.com
01869 246530

Committee Members:

Bob Hessian (*Chairman*)
info@blhs.org.uk
01869 350662
Sally James (*Treasurer*)
01869 243804
Sally Dexter (*Minutes Secretary*)
Peter Crook
Matthew Hathaway
Gill King (*Archivist*)
John Roberts (*Membership Officer*)

Meetings Address:

The Clifton Centre
Ashdene Road
Bicester
OX26 2BH

Postal Address:

BLHS c/o Sally James
14 George Street
Bicester
OX26 2EG

Website:

www.blhs.org.uk