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Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

Town Development

Bicester Town Council seem to be facing a lot of the same issues today as their predecessor, Bicester Urban District Council, faced fifty years ago. The following piece was published in the Bicester Advertiser just before the February council meeting in 1966.

This statement is the Council's "blue paper" prepared for this week's meeting and is published in full before the Town Forum is called.

History

For many years the members of the Council have been concerned over the development of Bicester, for every member has wished to see Bicester grow into a well-balanced town.

The impact of the establishment of the Ordnance Depot by the Ministry of Defence, together with the development of the R.A.F. Station, has been felt in many ways.

These establishments have looked to Bicester as a centre for shopping and entertainment, and the educational facilities have served a wide area, including that of the two Service Departments.

When, in 1952, the Council acquired 107 acres of land (now known as Western Development), and embarked upon the building of houses for the civilian workers at the Ordnance Depot, the first step was taken in the vital link between the civilian population in Bicester and the centre of employment at the Ordnance Depot.

This development has continued, the Council wishing at all times to accept the responsibility for providing the houses which the Ministry of Defence have required. In accepting this responsibility, however, the balance between industry and housing within the urban district has been upset.

Housing and Industrial Development

In an attempt to maintain a proper balance between housing and industry the Council for many years pleaded with the County Planning Department for the provision of additional land for industry. Eventually the industrial estate in Launton Road was established through the acquisition of eight acres of land by the Bruce Engineering Company and from that small beginning other industrial development has taken

place, though not on a large scale. This development has been welcomed unanimously by the Council for two main reasons: (a) the provision of employment locally for persons living within the area, and (b) for the financial assistance which the establishment of industrial premises provides.

Whilst this industrial development has proceeded the Council have accepted the liability of providing further houses for the Ministry of Defence and with the completion of the 311 units, 611 houses will have been provided.

The Council are now embarking upon a further 60 houses and 129 are planned to the north of the town. This provision of houses for the Ministry of Defence is not the only Council house programme, for additional houses for Bicester people have been provided and the total number of Council houses is approximately 1,100, and with future house building will approximate to some 1,300 Council houses.

In view of this development, together with the considerable private house development which is taking place, the Council unanimously welcomed the proposal for the provision of the gasification plant in Bicester by the Southern Gas Board. This in itself will mean the provision of an installation providing substantial rateable value.

Future Growth

It is significant that after many years of endeavour by the Council, the County Council have reached the conclusion that Bicester is a most desirable town to develop and the County Council development team are giving considerable thought to the proper planning of Bicester.

In the report of the Technical Officers of the County Council it was evident that the County as a whole had been considered and Bicester was singled out as a town which should become the second largest in Oxfordshire. A population of 30,000 was suggested.

From discussions which have taken place the County Council Officials regard the development of Bicester as an opportunity to plan the finest town in Oxfordshire.

From the local Council's point of view population increase is all very well

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Dates For Your Diary

Exploring Your Roots Talk

15th February - 7:30pm

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March Newsletter Submissions Deadline

4th March

Votes For Women Talk

21st March - 7:30pm

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but unless it is matched with industrial development it could prove costly. Industrial development is therefore essential and the only way in which some guarantee is available of industrial, commercial and housing development so far has been presented by partnership with the Greater London Council.

Co-operation with the Greater London Council and the Oxfordshire County Council

The discussions which have taken place in the past with the Greater London Council were taken a great step forward on Friday last when a meeting was held at the County Hall between representatives of the County Council, the Bicester Urban District Council and the Greater London Council.

From the point of view of the Greater London Council Bicester is considered to be a suitable town for a planned development scheme, and in this planned development, population and industry would come to Bicester, phased over a period of years.

It has been emphasised that the character of the town will not be lost

and in accepting this development the benefits which go with it will be shared by the increasing population. This development should add to the prosperity of the town.

It is essential that at all stages cooperation with the Bicester Council should be maintained and to this end a joint committee is proposed at which discussions will take place on the programme envisaged. By this development, improvements in

approaches to the town and the road pattern generally will be accelerated.

Ultimate Effect of Development

The ultimate effect of this development may well be that Bicester will grow and become a much more economic unit, and when at some stage in the future the position of Bicester as the centre of an area within the County Council is considered, the possibility of its continuing as a separate entity should be enhanced.

The Sub-Committee which met the Greater London Council and the County Council were unanimously in favour of proceeding further. The committee urged the Council to unanimously support the proposals for the expansion of Bicester by the acceptance of industry, housing and population from the Greater London Council area, for in their opinion this is the only way in which the proper planning and growth of Bicester may be ensured.

- Matthew Hathaway

Marj's Memories The Depot in the Fifties

I started work in BOD Bicester in 1950, 5 years after the war. At that time the depot was a BOD (Base Ordnance Depot); some years later it was changed to a COD (Central Ordnance Depot).

The store sheds contained small arms and armaments and the large gun park was visible from the main road. I was a clerk in D3, a big open office, packed with desks and cabinets and most of it occupied by National Service RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps) soldiers with some civilians. These young men (mostly 18 to 20 year olds) came from all over the country, some from universities and good jobs in "Civvy Street". It was a happy place and, although they took their work seriously, there was always time for a bit of humour. After all most of them would rather not have been there but were making the best of their 2 years' service. National Service was a good leveller - all walks of life together.

The Depot covers 42 square miles of various sites and regiments. At that time there were 4 battalions* of RAOC (18 Battalion was based in Graven Hill). The REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) were



based in 39 Base Workshops in C Site, later changed to 9 Central Workshops. The Pioneer Corps was in Arncott and the RASC (Royal Army Service Corps) was based in E Site. The Military Police were based on Graven Hill. They wore red caps.

We signed on in the morning at 0754 hours, had an hour for lunch and finished at 5.00 pm for 4 days and Fridays we finished at 4.30 pm.

There were buses from the outlying villages to the Bus Park in Palmer Avenue where people changed to go into various sites. Bicester staff could get on a bus in North Street, but a lot of staff cycled to work.

The Gates of each site were manned by ADC Policemen and everyone was required to dismount and walk through the gate. On one occasion, my friend who was running late decided to skip the dismount bit and rode at speed straight through. The policeman shouted her and because she ignored him, he jumped on his bike and chased her all through D Site and went straight into the Colonel in charge and reported her. The Colonel gave her a telling off and said it was "preposterous". That became our word of the day!

- Marjorie Dean MBE

*A battalion consists of 400 to 1,000 men commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel.

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Adverts taken from the Bicester Advertiser - September 1934

Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

9th February 1866

ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER OF BICESTER - Mr Edwin Harriss will be happy to give lessons in Pianoforte, Organ, Harmonium, and Singing, Harmony and Counterpoint. Instruction either by the quarter or single lessons. Schools attended.

Mr Harriss, having had considerable experience as Choirmaster, is open to treat with Clergymen for the training of choirs. Numerous testimonials from Clergymen and Organists.

4th February 1916

BIBLE CLASS - The Wesleyan Men's Bible Class annual tea was held in the vestry of the Wesleyan Chapel on Tuesday evening, when there was a good attendance. After tea, parlour games were played, and five minute speeches were given by the Rev. W. H. Noble, Mr Walter George, Mr W. Golder, Mr J. Coles, Mr A. Derrington, Mr T. Grimsley and Mr T. G. Prentice.

4th February 1966

BICESTER'S ONLY SURVIVING TAILOR CELEBRATES GOLDEN WEDDING - In a loft at the back of his son's business, Mr Charles Lambourne, aged 74 years, still carries on as a part-time tailor, the trade he was apprenticed to many years ago. Last week he and his wife, Frances Mary, celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary.

The couple were married at the Bicester Congregational Church on January 27th 1916. Both are natives of Bicester. Mrs Lambourne, now aged 70 years, was formerly Miss Timms.

They both met on social occasions in Bicester when Mr Lambourne was a member of the flourishing Y.M.C.A. band. "The band was the centre of many social activities in Bicester then." Mr Lambourne said.

The First World War broke up the band's activities and the many social occasions connected with it, and it seems they have never really been replaced.

Mr Lambourne was apprenticed to Mr Walter George, who was very well known as a local tailor.

Following some years of touring the country learning his trade, which included a period with a West End tailor, he came back to Bicester in 1920 and set up business on



his own at 43 Sheep Street. After some 30 years he retired and his son Harold took over the premises to sell books and greetings cards.

But Mr Lambourne still carries on with his own trade in a loft at the rear of the premises. Purely part-time, he said, and added "I am the only surviving tailor in the town."

At the time, he was "knocking up" a costume coat for a customer at Gloucester. "Through recommendation I was asked to do that job." he said.

One sad experience in their life was the fate of the elder son, Bill, who died in action during the last war, on Mrs Lambourne's birthday.

Looking back on his life as a tailor, Mr Lambourne remembers how he could run up a suit of the best material for 50s. "The same suit today" he said "cost anything from 20 to 25 gns."

After the first World War he remembered that it was the end of the private tailor. Once when a representative called on him he said "you're the first one I've seen for miles around that is still carrying on the business."

Mr Lambourne joined the Bicester Bowls Club in 1923. "I think I am the oldest playing member" he said.

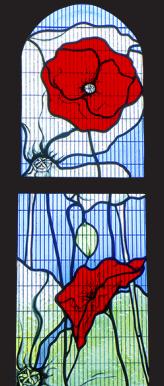
Although Valentine cards have changed somewhat since their courting days, Mr and Mrs Lambourne were very happy to pose for their Wedding Anniversary picture with the cards as a background.

Roll of Honour

This is the local man who died in the Great War, 100 years ago this month.

Private Thomas Percival Stone, of Bicester.

Died: 8th February 1916 Aged: 20 Served in: Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars



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Plain Colours and Fancy Floral Designs at
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Adverts taken from the Bicester Advertiser - September 1934

Village History Enslow

Enslow is a small hamlet on the banks of the River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal. It lies within the Parish of Bletchingdon where the medieval road linking London with Chipping Norton crossed the Cherwell.

There was a bridge there by the time that John Leland toured England in 1538–43. John Ogilby's Britannia Atlas of 1675 records a timber bridge that he called "Emley Bridg".

In 1718 the road was made into a turnpike, and at some stage the timber bridge was replaced with a stone one of pointed arches. In 1814 the stone bridge was widened on its downstream side to almost double its former width. In contrast with the older upstream side of the bridge, the 1814 arches are rounded.

Enslow had a water mill that

was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086, and again in 1340 and in the 17th and 18th centuries. The arrival of the Oxford Canal led to the building of a wharf and associated buildings in 1788. Early in the 19th century the Rock of Gibraltar public house was built to serve the trade on and around the wharf.

From 1845 the Oxford and Rugby Railway ran through the hamlet and in 1850 Bletchingdon railway station was built there. British Railways closed the station in 1964 but the line remains open as part of the Cherwell Valley Line.



Bletchingdon Railway Station - 1961

Enslow Hill, currently the site of a quarry, is thought to have been identical with the Spelleburge (Old English for "Speech Hill") recorded as a traditional meeting place for the Ploughley Hundred in Anglo-Saxon times. In 1596 the hill was the site of the unsuccessful Oxfordshire Rising over enclosures of common land.

- Matthew Hathaway

Village History Fencott & Murcott

Murcott is a village between the River Ray and Otmoor, about 4 miles south of Bicester. Fencott is a hamlet nearby.

In 1542 the Crown granted most of the land at Murcott to the Dean

and Chapter of Westminster Abbey. They retained it until the end of the 19th century, when it passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

There was also one hide of land that belonged to Abingdon Abbey.

In about 1180 the Abbot of Abingdon gave this holding in an exchange of land to one William Turpin. In 1230 Godstow Abbey bought the land from Osbert Turpin, but had to continue paying quitrent to Abingdon Abbey. At the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s the land passed to the Crown, which disposed of it in 1553.



Murcott Mission Room

Fencott used to have a public house, the Black Bull. It closed before 1939, but there is still a Black Bull Lane in the hamlet.

The Nut Tree public house, in Murcott, is a mid-18th century thatched building. It is now a gastropub and in 2009 was awarded a Michelin Star. Murcott used to have a second pub, the Marlake House, but this had closed by 1939.

Murcott Mission Room was built in 1895 to a plain Early English design by local Gothic Revival architect A. Mardon Mowbray. The Mission Room is a Church of England chapel, part of the Benefice of the Ray Valley, but it is sometimes used by other denominations as well.

- Matthew Hathaway

Talks Update

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

Monday 15th February

We learn about **Exploring your Roots** with Alan Simpson. Covering the techniques used to research your ancestry. The talk will provide something of interest for people at all levels of ability, as well as a Q&A session to answer your family history queries.

Monday 21st March

Muriel Pilkington explains the history behind **Votes for Women**. From the very early efforts for equality between men and women, through the attempts to get votes for women in the mid and later 19th century, to the First World War.

Monday 18th April

This will be a social event for members to celebrate the Society's 30th anniversary. It will include a talk by Bob Hessian on the history of the Society.

Beer, Sausages & Marmalade Talk

The Chairman, Bob Hessian, introduced our speaker, the ever popular local historian Liz Wooley, to talk about the history of Beer, Sausages and Marmalade production in Oxford.

Before 1800 most pubs brewed their own beer, but by 1875 there were four family brewers in Oxford and four more out in the county. The city breweries were located in the St Thomas' area.

Morrells Lion Brewery used a water wheel for power and employed many women throughout the First World War. The family also built Headington Hill Hall in 1824.

Another brewery, in Paradise Street, was owned by Edward Tawney. He built almshouses in Oxford and served as mayor.

In 1830 Hanleys Brewery was located in Pembroke Street, but it was later taken over by Halls Brewery, who became the largest

brewer in Oxford. They had over thirty horses for their deliveries.

The Oxford Sausage is credited to Dorothy Spreadbury, but most Oxford butchers had their own recipe. There were probably a dozen butchers in the city in the 19th century, but there are now only three, all located in the Covered Market. Of these three, Aldens is possibly the best known, but there is also Hedges and Fellers.

Frank Cooper's Marmalade was first made in 1874 by his wife in High Street. Having made more than enough for their own consumption they began selling it in their shop. It proved to be very popular and by 1902 they needed more facilities so they moved to a new factory and shop in Park End Street. Eventually the growth in trade meant another move, this time to the old ice rink and cinema in Botley Road.

In 1967 the company was bought



by Brown and Poulson, who continue to use the brand name but no longer produce the marmalade in Oxford.

The marmalade was originally sold in earthenware pots, some of which have been found amongst Scott's artefacts in Antarctica.

Cooper's house and shop in High Street now has a blue plaque to commemorate Sarah Cooper and the Park End Street factory is now a listed building.

- Peter Crook

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