

Issue: 22 June 2016

# Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society



Fifty fascinating objects, each telling a unique story, have been brought together in one exhibition to celebrate Oxfordshire Museums Service's 50th anniversary. Each of the objects has been chosen by community groups and members of the Service past and present, including BLHS.

The exhibition showcases Oxfordshire's rich heritage through the memories, experiences and interests of people from across the county. It features some fantastic items, including some fabulous Anglo-Saxon jewellery, a clock gun, a bicycle and even part of a human spine with an arrow embedded in it! With hands-on activities for adults and children alike it's definitely something for the whole family to enjoy!

Bicester Local History Society selected a wedding ring as their object. The ring originally belonged to Mary Dew (nee Bryan), from her marriage to Robert Dew at Somerton Church on 25th January

1798. It eventually got passed down to Mary's great granddaughter, Dorothy Dew (1888-1987), of Mill Lane, Lower Heyford. Dorothy was Headmistress of Lower Heyford School from 1913 and her father, George Dew, was the Relieving Officer for Bicester Poor Law Union.

We chose the ring as it is a very personal item from a family well-known in the Bicester area. Its fragility hints at a long marriage.

The exhibition is on at the Oxfordshire Museum, in Woodstock, until Sunday 11th September. The museum itself is well worth a visit too, and entry is completely free.

- M. Hathaway



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## Dates For Your Diary

Lost Villages of Oxfordshire Talk  
20th June - 7:30pm  
see page 7

July Newsletter Submissions  
Deadline  
1st July

The Real Candleford Green Talk  
18th July - 7:30pm  
see page 7



The Mary Dew wedding ring on display in the exhibition.

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Taken from the Bicester Church News - 1971

# Village History Godington

Godington is a small village about 5 miles north-east of Bicester. The parish is bounded on all but the west side by a brook called the Birne, which also forms the county boundary with Buckinghamshire.

The village was first settled by the Saxons. Before the Norman conquest two Saxons, Siward and Siwate, held the Manor of Godington, but the Domesday Book records that by 1086 a Norman called Richard Puingiant held it. He also held the manor of Middleton Stoney and Godington was held as part of that manor for some centuries thereafter.

By the middle of the 12th century the manor of Godington was held by Richard de Camville, who gave Poodle Farm, in the parish, to the Augustinian Missenden Abbey, in Buckinghamshire. The Abbey retained Poodle Farm until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century and by 1541 William Fermor, of Somerton, had bought the farm. By the time of his death in 1552 Fermor also held Godington Manor, thus reuniting Poodle with the other former de Camville lands. Godington remained with the Fermors until the last direct heir, another William Fermor, died without a direct successor in 1828.

There is a rectangular mediaeval moat next to the parish church. The present Moat Farm house inside the moated area is dated 1672.

By 1535 Magdalen College, Oxford, held three hay meadows in the parish. It still held them in 1817 when the duty to pay tithes was commuted. Most of the parish was farmed under the open field system until 1603, when it was enclosed by agreement between Sir Richard Fermor, the Rector and one of the local farmers.

The earliest written record of the parish's Holy Trinity Church is from 1221, when the Abbess of the Benedictine Elstow Abbey, in Bedfordshire, disputed with a later Richard de Camville which one of them held the advowson of the parish. The Abbey won and retained

the right until its dissolution in 1539. After this the Crown held the advowson until 1608 when it was sold to Sir Henry Fowkes, who immediately sold it on to Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

The Fermors were recusants, and with their support the majority of Godington parishioners remained Roman Catholic. In

1739 Roman Catholics still outnumbered Anglicans in the parish and a Roman Catholic priest lived in the parish to serve them. Early in the 19th century it was recorded that the farming families were Catholic but their labourers were Protestant. Until 1900 in the roof of the farmhouse at Moat Farm there was a Roman Catholic chapel that was served by a priest from Hethe. In 1759 it was also recorded that recusants from Godington worshipped at the Fermor family chapel at Tusmore Park.

By 1790 the mediaeval Church of England parish church of the Holy Trinity was in disrepair and in danger of collapse. But in 1792 William Fermor employed a fellow-Roman Catholic to rebuild it. In 1852 the church was restored and rectangular Georgian windows were converted to lancets, and in 1905 the building was restored again. The mediaeval font survives today, and some mediaeval masonry remains in the bell tower. The tower used to have three bells, but in 1792 two of them were sold to pay for rebuilding the church. The surviving bell was cast in 1717, and there is also a Sanctus bell cast in 1793.

By 1665 the Rectory was a large house, assessed at six hearths for



Holy Trinity Church

hearth tax. By 1787 it was “ruinous and decayed” and Corpus Christi College loaned £200 to rebuild it. In 1867 it was replaced with a new parsonage, on a different site, designed by the architect William Wilkinson. In 1928 the ecclesiastical parish of Godington was combined with that of Stratton Audley and in the 1930s the “new” parsonage was sold as a private house, now called The Old Rectory.

Between 1895 and 1899 the Great Central Railway extended its main line from the Midlands to London. It passes through the east of Godington parish on an embankment, crossing in and out of the parish (and county) on bridges over the Birne. Godington was too small to have its own railway station and the nearest Great Central ones were Finmere and Calvert, about 3.5 miles away in either direction. British Rail closed Finmere station in 1963, Calvert station in 1964 and the main line between Calvert and Rugby in 1966.

Godington was nearer to Marsh Gibbon and Poundon station, about 2 miles to the south, on the Varsity Line. The London and North Western Railway opened this station in 1880 and British Rail closed it in 1968.

- Matthew Hathaway

# Marj's Memories

## Faces of Bicester Town

It could be said that Bicester Town has played at 'Changing Faces'

Not only on the people; but also in the places!

The once "little" town keeps expanding, folk come and put roots down.

There are plenty of happy faces, here in Bicester Town.

People move to Bicester – it's central to anywhere – North, south, east or west – it's easy to get there from here.

You can visit surrounding countryside and places that make history real,

Or go to Garth Park, in the centre of town, to unwind,

if that's how you feel!

There's also Bicester Village for those who like to shop;

Cars and coaches come rolling in – you really can shop till you drop!

Some people born in Bicester yearn to move away, It's strange, but nearly always, they come back again and stay.

It has a friendly atmosphere and, if you're feeling down,

Come into Sheep Street precinct and see the faces of Bicester Town.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

# Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

## 21st June 1856

**PEACE FESTIVITIES AT CHESTERTON** — On Tuesday last the pleasant village of Chesterton was a scene of rejoicing and festivity in honour of the Peace (following the Crimean War), in which the whole of the inhabitants joined. The excellent Vicar, the Rev. W.F Fortescue, and the farmers of the village having agreed to give the labouring poor a holiday and an entertainment. The affair was carried out in a most liberal manner.

An excellent dinner of beef, mutton, plum puddings and ale, was provided in the close opposite the vicarage. The field was decked for the occasion in a most brilliant manner. There must have been upwards of fifty banners floating in the breeze, many of them very large and elaborately made. The poor were waited on by their employers, and more affluent neighbours, and greatly enjoyed their feast.

After dinner came rural sports, such as racing for hats, waistcoats, bonnets and gowns; blind-man's buff, etc. The Bicester Brass Band was present, and country dancing was kept up with much spirit during the afternoon and evening.

Refreshments for the gentry, the farmers and their visitor friends were elegantly set out in the library of the vicarage, and the worthy vicar was most assiduous in his attention to all present, and evidently determined that all should enjoy the day.

The Earl of Jersey was present in the field to witness the dinner and the enjoyment of the labourers, and several neighbouring clergymen were also visitors. The holiday was prolonged to a late hour, and before its close a long round of cheers was given for the vicar and their entertainers.

## 12th June 1896

**YOUTHFUL SUCCESS** - A prize has been awarded

to Fred Ekins, Waterlane, Bicester, attending St. Mary's Roman Catholic School, for working in embroidery three advertisements for Mack's Double Starch and Rising Sun Stove and Metal Polish. The specimens are the best of one hundred sets sent in by as many children from different schools. The prize consists of a book entitled "Snow Sprites and Other Stories" and is on view, together with the winning specimens, in the window of Mr J.W Evans, Sheep Street.



## 12th June 1936

**EXCESSIVE SPEED** - William John Jacques, Old Botley, Oxford, was charged with driving a lorry at an excessive speed. He did not appear, but was represented by Mr A.J Henman, of Woodstock, who pleaded "Guilty".

P.S Petrie gave evidence that defendant drove through a two-mile control, on the Bicester-Oxford Road, on April 27th, in 4mins. 49secs., equivalent to a speed of 24.9mph. His legal speed was 20mph.

Mr. Henman said that at the time of the offence the defendant's speedometer was out of order. He had been driving for 12 years and had only one minor offence against him. In view of his good record he asked the magistrates to deal leniently with him and not endorse his licence.

He was fined £2, but licence not endorsed.

William Henry Hope, of Southville, Bristol, pleaded "Not Guilty" to a similar offence at the same place.

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P.S Petrie gave the defendant's time as 2mins. 31secs., equivalent to a speed of 47.7mph. His legal speed was 30mph.

Defendant said that a new engine had been put in his lorry only a day or two before the alleged offence and therefore he would not be travelling at 47mph, the engine not having been properly run in.

There were previous convictions against Hope for similar offences and he was fined £3. His licence was endorsed.

Alfred James Kirby, Weston-on-the-Green, was similarly summoned and pleaded "Guilty".

Defendant's time was given, in travelling the control, as 3mins. 39secs. - 34mph. His legal speed being 30mph.

He was fined £2, but with no endorsement.

## 24th June 1976

**NEW TRAFFIC ROUTES OPEN ON TUESDAY** - New traffic routes in Bicester town centre come into operation on Tuesday with the opening of the new inner link road.

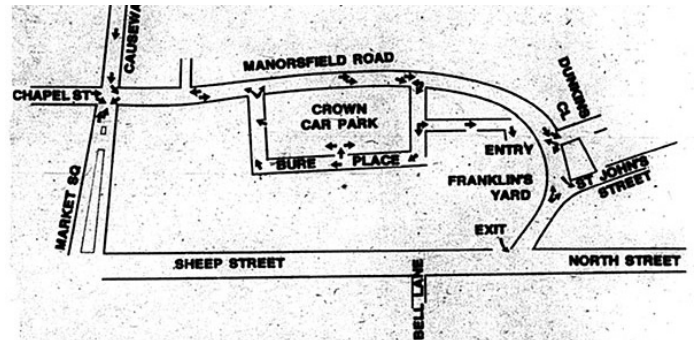
The new road, Manorsfield Road, links The Causeway and St. John's Street and gives access to the new Crown car park with about 200 spaces.

Part of Manorsfield Road and the car park were open before Christmas. But the opening of the whole road was delayed because at first it was being built in two stages, and there had to be a wait for The Causeway one-way order to be made.

The new road has created a new crossroads in the centre of town at the old T-junction formed by The Causeway, Market Square and Chapel Street.

From Tuesday The Causeway becomes one-way for traffic travelling from King's End to the Square. But King's End and Church Street remain two-way for traffic to reach Old Place Yard.

At the new crossroads traffic will not be able to turn right from The Causeway into Chapel Street and because of the one-way cannot turn left from Chapel



Street into The Causeway, as at present. Chapel Street traffic has to go straight up Manorsfield Road or turn right into the Square. Traffic coming off the Square can turn right into Manorsfield Road or left into Chapel Street. And traffic in Manorsfield Road can only turn left into the Square and not straight across into Chapel Street.

Manorsfield Road is two-way for its entire length. Motorists wanting to reach the Crown car park from The Causeway or Market Square will find the entrance right round in Bure Place, which is one-way. Cars have been able to get into the car park from what will now be the exit only.

The other major change is at Franklin's Yard car park.

Entry is off Manorsfield Road and the exit is through the present entrance off Sheep Street. There is only a left turn from Franklin's Yard on to Sheep Street from Tuesday.

The whole scheme, which has included re-routing and ducting the town stream, has cost about £250,000.

It is the first stage of Bicester's town centre re-development. If and when a bypass is built, and the M40 extended, the idea is to make The Causeway, Market Square and Sheep Street pedestrian precincts.

The whole scheme has been carried out by contractors for Cherwell District Council, who inherited the project from the former Bicester Urban Council.

## Big Lunch

On Sunday 12th June many Bicester residents braved the wet weather and made their way into the town centre for this year's Bicester's Big Lunch.

As in previous years the Society had a display stand in our usual spot at the top of Crown Walk. This year we ran a "How well do you know the buildings of Bicester?" quiz. Asking people to identify five old buildings in the town centre from four close up images of each.

For those of you who didn't see us at the big lunch, we will be running the same quiz in next month's edition of the newsletter.

- Matthew Hathaway



# Missionary Pageant at the Garth

*On Thursday 4th June 1914 the gardens of the Garth played host to Bicester's very own pageant. The Bicester Advertiser printed the following article about it:*

Brilliant weather prevailed on the occasion of the pageant and sale of work in the Garth Gardens (by kind permission of Mr and Mrs C.A Keith-Falconer) on behalf of those two well-known missionary societies — the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Additional Curates' Society. There was a large and representative gathering from all parts of the Deanery at both performances, one being given in the afternoon and the other in the evening. Amongst those present were Mrs G Herbert Morrell (Headington), who opened the proceedings, Lord Lawrence, Mrs and Miss Tubb, Rev. W.H Draper (Middleton Stoney), Miss Bayfield, Lady Trevor, Mrs J.W Hunt, Miss Moulden, Miss Butcher, Rev. W.M Miller and Miss Miller, Miss Scott-Thomson, Mrs Saunders, Rev. T.G Evans, Rev. Patten (Mixbury), Dr. G.N Montgomery, Rev. G.R Tidmarsh (Piddington), Miss Hacon (Over Worton), Rev. and Mrs Meredith Brown, Rev. G.C May (Kirtlington), Mr, Mrs and Miss Graham (Fritwell), Mr Drummond Graham, Dr. and Mrs May (Fewcott), Rev. W Cartwright (Aynho), Miss Harper, Mrs Whitmarsh and Miss Swann (secretaries of the Oxford Branch of the Women's Home Missions Society), Rev. Buss, Mrs Harris (Emlyn House), etc.

The sale of work was officially opened about 2.30 by Mrs G.H Morrell, of Headington Hill, who is greatly interested in Missionary work — whether home or foreign. She said it was unnecessary to deal at any length with the objects for which that sale of work and pageant had been organised. It was now thirty years since she was first connected with the Women's Home Mission Society, and she well knew how splendidly the people of this neighbourhood had responded to the appeals on behalf of the Society. She was sure Oxfordshire especially never liked



to be behind in assisting with their funds. At the present time there were many new Societies being brought into existence, but they must not neglect the old ones, which needed continued support. It sometimes seemed as though the newly-formed ones received all the support, the old Societies being allowed to drop out. No doubt the new societies had excellent objects, but this should not debar people from still contributing as liberally to the old established ones. She spoke of the labours of the clergy who went to foreign lands, saying it was impossible to overestimate the value of their work. She had great pleasure in declaring the sale open, and hoped the funds would benefit considerably by their presence and support.

Master Michael O'Reilly then presented Mrs Morrell with a bouquet of roses, the Vicar (Rev. W. O'Reilly), thanking her for her presence and encouraging words.

The various stalls were as follows: Plain and fancy work and toy stall, in the capable hands of Mrs Cooper (Upper Heyford), Mrs O'Reilly, Mrs Harris, Mrs Meredith and other helpers, the work having been done by various working parties in the deanery and other friends. Provision stall — Mrs Coles (Oxford), Miss Draper (Middleton Stoney) and Mrs G.N. Montgomery. Tea stall — Lady Lawrence superintending, assisted by Mrs Patten, Mrs G. Timberlake, Mrs W. Davey, Mrs Bennett, Miss K. Bennett, Miss Bonner, Mrs Coggins, the Misses Finch, Mrs Watts, the Misses Hall, Mrs Bell, Mrs W.E. Pankhurst, Mrs W. Tompkins, Mrs J. Stevens, and a large number of other helpers. Cake weighing — Miss M. Davey and Miss D. Pankhurst. Bran tub — Miss Little (Middleton Stoney).

Mrs E. Slater-Harrison, as president of the local Home Mission Association, was helping generally at the various stalls. During the proceedings Master H. Davis and Master H. Hunloke were patrolling the grounds with a miniature pony, "Midge", which bore on its back a collecting box and a written appeal asking for assistance on behalf of missions.

The arrangements for the day could certainly not have been placed in more able hands. The huge success of all branches of the organisation showed what an enormous amount of energy and labour must have been put in, as everything went off without the slightest hitch. Great praise is due to those ladies and gentlemen named as taking part and also to the many friends who carried out their labours "behind the scenes" — and there were many such.

The Pageant, which was indeed a gorgeous display, was most ably gone through by ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood, the Bicester Church Choir and the Bucknell schoolchildren. The piece taken was "The Coming of the Dawn", being episodes from early English Church History, by Mary H. Debenham, and the historical scenes from the period of the coming of St. Augustine in 597 until the time of Christian England in 670 were most ably portrayed, the costumes of the monks and all others connected being most realistic, giving the onlookers quite an insight into the life and growth of the primitive English Church.

The proceedings commenced with the hymn, joined in by those present, "The Church's One Foundation", and then the pageant commenced. On the entry of the first performers verses from the 79th psalm could be heard to be chanted from behind the

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trees, this having a pretty effect and being very much admired. The dances of the Bucknell schoolchildren — prettily attired in blue frocks and smock coats, representing Anglo-Saxon boys and girls — round their May-pole, was well received, the large audience suitably demonstrating its appreciation. At the conclusion of the Pageant — which, owing to lack of space, we are unable to deal with fully — the hymn “O God Our Help in Ages Past” was sung.

The cake-weighing competition resulted in Mrs Hawkins guessing the exact weight (6 3/4 lbs) and the cake is now at Mr W. Davey’s, where it may be obtained on application. The cake was kindly given by Mrs J.B. Kingscote, of Stratton Audley.

Music was supplied by the orchestra of Mr W.H. Grimsley, A.R.C.O., and added greatly to the enjoyment of the proceedings.

Those taking part in the pageant, in addition to those mentioned below and twenty Bucknell schoolchildren, were: Miss Goldring, Miss E. Randall, Mr E. Jones, Mr R.A. Stone, Mr H.J. Webb, Mr T. Hudson, Mr R.B. Goble, Mr H. Walker, Mr J. Plater, Mr A. Evans, Mr I.G.P. Durrant, Mr A. Bishop, Mr E.G. Colby and Mr W. Bennett.

The following was the programme:—

**Episode I. “The British Church, fallen on evil days.”**

Place — The Monastery of Llancaroen, in South Wales.

Characters:

St. Cadoc, the Abbott (brown habit), cousin of St. David - Rev. W. O’Reilly

Two monks (grey habit) - Mr Ludford & Mr Simpson

**Episode II. “The coming of St. Augustine.”**

Time — 597. Place — Canterbury.

Characters:

Ethelbert, King of Kent (purple and white) - Dr. Jones

Bertha, his Frankish Queen (green dress, tawny robe) - Mrs L. Meredith

Mrs L. Meredith

Ostritha, an English widow from Deira (Yorkshire) (blue and grey) - Miss E. Cheeseman

Aelfric, her lost son (brown) - Mr Harris

Maidens (blue and grey) - Misses Harris and May and Mrs Ludford

Children - From Bucknell

Augustine (black Chasuble) - Archdeacon Harris

Monks (black Benedictine habit) - From Bicester

**Episode III. “The Conversion of Northumbria.”**

**Scene 1. — The Royal Exile.**

Time - 616.

Place - Court of Redwald (King of East Anglia).

Characters:

Edwin, exiled Prince, afterwards King of Northumbria (red and white) - Dr. Saunders

East Anglian Thegn (crimson and blue) - Dr. Hodges

Paulinus, a Roman priest, afterwards Bishop of York (black cowl) - Rev. J.L. Meredith

**Scene 2. — Edwin’s conversion.**

Time - 627. Place — York.

Characters: as in Scene 1, also

Coifi, Priest of Woden (white robe) - Mr C. Ludford

Hilda, niece to Edwin (white dress) - Miss Mountain

Ostritha, widow attending Queen Ethelburga (blue and brown) - Miss E. Cheeseman

Ladies of the Court - Miss Coleman, Mrs Walton and Miss Tanner

**Episode IV. “The Birth of English Sacred Song.”**

Time - About 670.

Place - St. Hilda’s Monastery for Monks and Nuns, Whitby.

Characters:

Hilda, Abbess (grey habit) - Miss C. Spencer

Ealfred, a Nun of Royal Blood (grey habit) - Miss Harris

Bega (grey habit) - Miss Singleton

Other Nuns - Miss T. Cheeseman, Miss Hurst, Mrs Auger

Caedmon, a herdsman on the Abbey lands (brown) - Rev. T. Green.

- Matthew Hathaway

## Roll of Honour

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

**Gunner Edmund Cox**, of Weston-on-the-Green.

Died: 6<sup>th</sup> June 1916

Aged: 31

Served in: Royal Garrison Artillery

**Private James Henry Eyles**, of Stratton Audley.

Died: 10<sup>th</sup> June 1916

Aged: 19

Served in: Gloucestershire Regiment

**Leading Cook’s Mate Harvey Bateman**, native of Bletchington.

Died: 17<sup>th</sup> June 1916

Aged: 34

Served in: Royal Navy - HMS Eden

**Private Henry Thomas Parker**, of North Street, Bicester.

Died: 29<sup>st</sup> June 1916

Aged: 21

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 June

Deborah Hayter tells us about the **Lost Villages of Oxfordshire**. There are over 120 in the county, but why? We look beyond the obvious explanations at the life and death of deserted villages and the research into their decline.

### Monday 18th July

Martin Greenwood talks to us about **The Real Candleford Green** with a lively new story of Fringford, Flora Thompson's Candleford Green. Previously unseen letters from Flora and others add a very personal touch to the story.

### Monday 19th September

This meeting will begin with our 2016 AGM, following which Rowena Archer will talk to us about **Mediaeval Women**.

## Dressing Up The Past Talk

For May's talk, BLHS welcomed Ellie Read from the Oxfordshire History Centre to talk about pageants in early 20th century Oxfordshire.

Many of the audience were unaware of how popular pageants were, let alone had come across the expression 'pageantitis' the huge craze which gripped the country particularly in the early part of the 20th century.

The beginning of this craze, which involved re-enacting scenes of local history in the locations where they took place, is attributed to Louis Napoleon Parker. Pageants became huge outdoor spectacles, involving hundreds of people. Parker became inundated with requests to write episodes of local history for re-enactment. For the Warwick Pageant in July 1906, a huge grandstand was erected, and Parker would sit in the crow's nest, directing people over

the months and months of rehearsals that took place.

Costumes were an integral part of the pageants, with people either making their own or hiring outfits. However, authenticity was always the main goal.

Professor Charles Oman went along to see the Warwick pageant, and a plan was hatched to hold a pageant in Oxford. A massive committee was set up: the mayor and the city men took care of the business side, whilst the University advised on the historical aspects. In order to organize and set up the pageant, money was put into a special guaranteed fund. Different ticket prices were devised for seats, and special days were allocated for school children to watch. The pageant took months and months to organize and rehearse, before it finally took place in 1907 in a green

field beside the Botanical Gardens in Oxford.

There were over 2,700 performers involved, and the actual pageant consisted of 16 episodes of history, and lasted for over 3 hours. The pageant would have been completely scripted, and since there was no amplification, books of words (scripts) were available so the audience could follow what was happening. It was a true organizational feat, with postcards being issued to individuals advising them of the dates and times for their rehearsals. The Oxford pageant was organized by Frank Lascelles from Sibford Gower, and the money raised was given to the Radcliffe hospital.

There was a church pageant in Bicester in June 1914, which took place in the grounds of the Garth (see page 5).

- Sally Dexter

## 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*)  
John Roberts (*Membership Officer*)  
Peter Crook  
Matthew Hathaway

### 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](http://www.blhs.org.uk)