

# Bicester Historian

Issue: 23 July 2016

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

## Our Darkest Time



Pte W.C. Butler  
Died 21st July

Pte H.G. Clifton  
Died 23rd July

Rfn A.G. Castle  
Died 25th July

At 7:30am on the 1st July 1916, 100 years ago this month, the British forces on the front line in France began the "Big Push" that would become the major turning point of the First World War. The Battle of the Somme had begun.

It lasted a total of 141 days, until the 18th November, and incorporated nearly 14 miles of the front line, from Serre in the north to Maricourt to the south.

Over the preceding week the German trenches had been barraged with heavy shell fire and gas attacks aimed to

weaken their defensive position. On the morning of the advance 19 mines were detonated under the German trenches and so little resistance was expected.

But it hadn't been enough. The first British troops to go "over the top", walking in straight lines across No Man's Land, met with a hail of bullets that mowed them down in their thousands.

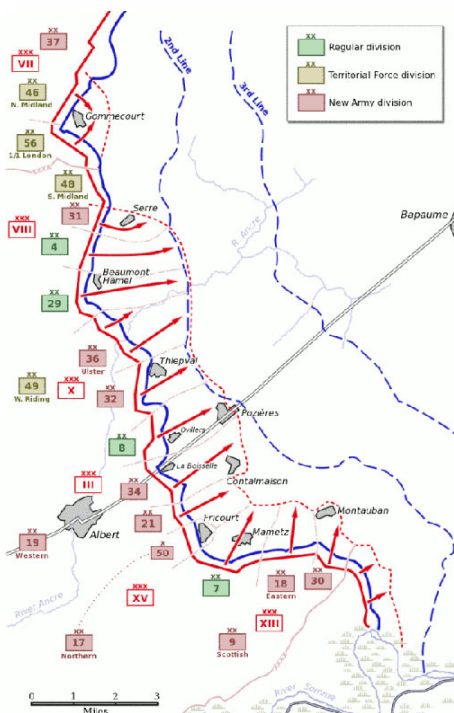
On that first day alone the British Army suffered 57,470 casualties and 19,240 deaths. British losses by the end of the battle totalled 481,842.

Our Roll of Honour, on pages 4 and 5, shows how many men this area lost just in the first month of the offensive. Many of them serving with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry who weren't involved in the first day of the battle, but seven battalions of which had fought on the Somme by the 18th November. The men pictured above are just three of the twenty-six men we lost in July 1916.

Many people joined in with the national silence at 7:28am on 1st July 2016 to remember the men who lost their lives in the offensive and reflect on their sacrifice.

The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, in Woodstock, is staging a series of events throughout the summer to commemorate the centenary of the battle. They are also inviting people to take in any First World War photographs, letters, diaries or objects they have on the 17th September when experts will be on hand to talk about them.

- M. Hathaway



British objective - 1st July 1916

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### Dates For Your Diary

- The Real Candleford Green Talk**  
18th July - 7:30pm  
see page 8
- August Newsletter Submissions Deadline**  
29th July
- Adderbury Village Walk**  
31st July - 2:30pm  
see page 5
- Adderbury Countryside Walk**  
14th August - 2pm  
see page 5

Be W. E. Tugge & Co., Golds' Green,  
House Furnishers and China and Glass Dealers,  
25, Bankruptley.

We are offering the

## STOCK-IN-TRADE

Of the above, amounting to £230, 10 11,  
Bought from the Trustees at a large discount.

**FURNITURE.**—The Stock comprises:  
Bedsteads and Bedding, Carpets, Linoleums, Bedroom and Dining-room Furniture, Easy Chairs, Fenders and Fire-irons, Screens, etc.

**The CHINA & GLASS** comprises:  
Dinner Sets, Tea Sets, Toilet Sets, Trinket Sets, Dessert Sets, Flower Pots, Vases, Ornaments, Tumblers, Wine, and Table Glass.

The Goods are all up-to-date, and the Sale presents an exceptional opportunity of securing High-class Goods at about half the usual prices.

**LAYTON & SON,**  
MARKET SQUARE, BICESTER.

Taken from the Bicester Herald - July 1916

# Village History Hampton Gay

Hampton Gay is a small hamlet in the Cherwell Valley, about 1.5 miles north of Kidlington.

A cast bronze clasp was found near St Giles' parish church in 1972. It is decorated with stylised acanthus leaves and may be late Saxon, suggesting that there may have been a settlement there in the 10th or 11th centuries, probably larger than the one that is there today.

After the Norman Conquest of England Robert d'Oyly gave an estate of three hides at Hampton Gay to his brother-in-arms, Roger d'Ivry, while a second estate of two hides at Hampton Gay belonged to the Crown. D'Ivry's holding became part of the honour of St. Valery, which, in the 13th century, was owned by Richard, 1st Earl of Cornwall. Under his successor Edmund, 2nd Earl of Cornwall, towards the end of the 13th century, the d'Ivry holding was merged with the Duchy of Cornwall. Meanwhile the royal estate at Hampton Gay became part of the honour of Gloucester and thereby followed the same descent as the manor of Finmere.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records that one Rainald was the tenant of both the d'Ivry and the royal estate. The de Gay family were tenants of both estates by about 1137 and remained so until 1222. The village's toponym combines their surname with the Old English for a village or farm.

In about 1170 Reginald de Gay gave a virgate of land (about 30 acres) to the house of the Knights Templar at Cowley. In about 1311 the Templars were suppressed and their holding at Hampton Gay was transferred to the Knights Hospitaller of Saint John of Jerusalem. In about 1218 Robert de Gay gave the tenancy of half a hide of the St. Valery estate to the Benedictine convent at Godstow. Between 1195 and 1205 the Augustinian Abbey of Osney bought the tenancy of two virgates at Hampton Gay from Robert de Gay who, in stages from 1210 to 1222, gave the remainder of his tenancy to the abbey.



The remains of the manor house

The three religious orders retained their estates at Hampton Gay until 1539 when they were suppressed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and forfeited their lands to the Crown, which in 1542 sold Hampton Gay to Leonard Chamberlayne, of Shirburn. In 1544 Chamberlayne sold the estate to John Barry, of Eynsham, whose family owned Hampton Gay until they got into financial difficulties and sold it in 1682.

The new owner was Sir Richard Wenman MP, who in 1686 became 4th Viscount Wenman. Wenman died in 1690 and his widow sold Hampton Gay in 1691 to William Hindes, of Priors Marston in Warwickshire. The Hindes family owned Hampton Gay until 1798 when Susannah, widow of Thomas Hindes, died without a male heir and left the manor to their daughter Anne and her husband. The manor changed hands again in 1809 and 1849, and in 1862 was bought by Wadham College, Oxford. In 1928 the college sold Hampton Gay to Colonel S.L. Barry of Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire, a descendant of the Barry family who had owned the manor in the 16th and 17th centuries. On his death in 1943 Col. Barry left the estate to his daughter Jeanne and her husband, the Honourable James McDonnell.

The Barry family built the manor house in the 16th century. It had an

E-shaped plan with gabled wings and a battlemented central porch. Its Elizabethan form remained unaltered until the 19th century, including original Elizabethan panelling in its principal rooms, but in 1809 it was reported to be in a neglected state. In the 1880s the house was divided into two tenements, and in 1887 it was gutted by fire. It has never been restored and remains an ivy-clad ruin. It is a Grade II listed building and a scheduled monument. Early in the 21st century English Heritage placed the manor house ruins on its register of historic buildings at risk, listing its priority as "A" and its condition as "very bad".

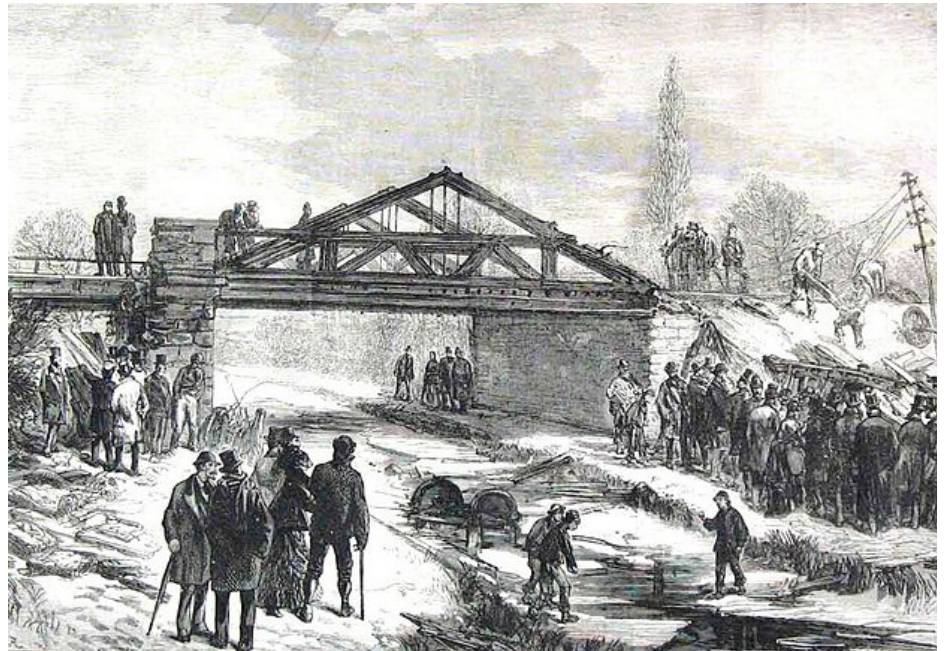
Tithe records show that Hampton Gay had a parish church by 1074. The Church of England parish church of Saint Giles had included features from at least as early as the 13th century, but in 1767-72 the Rev. Thomas Hindes, a member of the family that then owned the manor, had it completely rebuilt. In 1842 the antiquarian J.H. Parker condemned St. Giles' Georgian architecture as "a very bad specimen of the meeting-house style". In 1859 the curate, Rev. F.C. Hingeston, altered the church to his own designs, replacing its round-headed Georgian windows and south door with ones in an Early English Gothic style and having the west doorway re-cut in a Norman revival fashion.

*Cont...*



Hampton Gay had a water mill on the River Cherwell by 1219, when it became the property of Osney Abbey. It was a grist mill until 1681, when Vincent Barry leased it to a Mr Hutton, who converted it into a paper mill. In 1684 Hutton took over the corn mill at Adderbury Grounds, 12 miles upstream of Hampton Gay, and converted that into a paper mill. The mills produced pulp, but the paper was made in batches by hand until 1812, when Hampton Gay mill was re-equipped with a modern Fourdrinier machine that made paper mechanically and continuously. In 1863-73 the paper mill was rebuilt with a gasworks, steam engine and other machinery, but in 1875 it was destroyed by fire and then restored to production in 1876. In 1880 it had both a water wheel powered by the river and a steam engine fed by a Cornish boiler, and could produce about a ton of paper per day. The tenants running the mill were J. and B. New, and when the manor house was divided they became tenants of one of its two portions. However, by 1887 the News had gone bankrupt and their stock in trade was sold to settle unpaid rent.

The mediaeval population was larger than the present one. However, it declined and in 1428 the village was exempted from taxation because it had fewer than 10 householders. John Barry, who bought the manor in 1544, had made his money from wool, and he or his heirs enclosed land at Hampton Gay for sheep pasture. In 1596 Hampton Gay villagers joined those from Hampton Poyle who were plotting an agrarian revolt against the enclosures. The rebels planned to murder landowners including Vincent Barry and his daughter and then to march on London. A carpenter at Hampton Gay warned Barry, five ringleaders were arrested and taken to London for trial, and one was sentenced to be hanged and quartered. However, the Government also recognised the cause of the rebels' grievance and determined that "order should be taken about inclosures...that the poor may be able to live". Parliament duly passed an Act to restore to



Engraving of the scene of the accident from the Illustrated London News - 1874

arable use all lands that had been converted to pasture since the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558.

The Oxford and Rugby Railway between Oxford and Banbury was built past Hampton Gay in 1848-9. The nearest station provided was Kidlington, more than 1.5 miles to the south. British Railways closed Kidlington station in 1964 but the railway itself remains open as part of the Cherwell Valley Line.

On Christmas Eve 1874 one of the worst ever disasters on the Great Western Railway happened just a few hundred yards from the village. A train with 13 carriages and two engines had left Oxford Station for Birmingham at 11:40am. The train was about half an hour late and going about 40mph when, after six miles, the tyre of the wheel on a third-class carriage broke. The carriage left the track for about 300 yards, including the bridge of the River Cherwell. After the bridge, and before a similar bridge across the Oxford and Birmingham Canal, the carriage went down an embankment taking other carriages with it, breaking up as they crossed the field. Three carriages and a goods wagon carried on over the canal bridge, and another fell into the water. The front section of the train carried on for some distance.

The men from the paper mill tried to assist the injured in the snow and Mr Mallam, an Oxford surgeon who

was attending a patient nearby, gave what help he could, assisted by a young London doctor who was travelling on the train. Telegrams were sent to local stations to summon more medical help but it took an hour and a half before a special train arrived with more doctors and some much needed medical supplies. The special train was used to move the injured back to hospitals in Oxford. At least 26 died at the scene while four others were dead by the time the special train had arrived at Oxford station and at least one other died in hospital. The canal was dragged but no bodies were found.

An inquest was opened on 26th December 1874, using the manor house at Hampton Gay. The 26 bodies found at the scene were laid out in two rows in a large paper store in the paper mill for the court to view and seek formal identification, and the wreckage was also examined. The coronor and jury decided to reconvene in Oxford and permission was given to move the wreckage, but only one carriage would be moved to Oxford for further investigation and examination. The following week the coroner returned to Hampton Gay to further identify bodies there, and also those which had been kept in the third class waiting room at the Oxford Railway Station and one at the Radcliffe Infirmary.

- Matthew Hathaway

# Roll of Honour

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

**Private Frank Clifford**, of Finmere.

Died: 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 21      Served in: Wiltshire Regiment

**Private Harry Robert Kightley**, of Launton, native of Daventry.

Died: 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 19      Served in: Royal Fusiliers

**Private George Morris**, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 29      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Lieutenant Philip Giesler Norbury**, native of Bicester.

Died: 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 21      Served in: East Kent Regiment

**Private Frank Powell**, of St John's Street, Bicester.

Died: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 22      Served in: Welsh Regiment

**Private George Aldridge**, of Arccott.

Died: 7<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 35      Served in: Welsh Regiment

**Gunner Leonard Price**, of Oddington.

Died: 7<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 20      Served in: Royal Garrison Artillery

**Private Thomas Gaskins**, of Upper Arccott.

Died: 14<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 21      Served in: Machine Gun Corps

**Signaller James Norman**, of Upper Heyford.

Died: 15<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 24      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Arthur Thomas Stopp**, native of Islip.

Died: 17<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 34      Served in: Yorkshire Regiment

**Driver George Ernest Waddup**, of Caulcott.

Died: 18<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 35      Served in: Royal Field Artillery

**Private William Charles Butler**, of Launton.

Died: 21<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 27      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Frederick Charles Bolton**, of Middleton Stoney.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 25      Served in: Australian Infantry

**Private Herbert Charles Castle**, of Church Lane, Launton.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 19      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Howard George Clifton**, of North Street, Bicester.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 18      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private William James Drinkwater**, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 28      Served in: Royal Warwickshire Regiment

**Private Reginald Budd Sumner**, of Bucknell Lodge, Bucknell.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916      Aged: 20      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

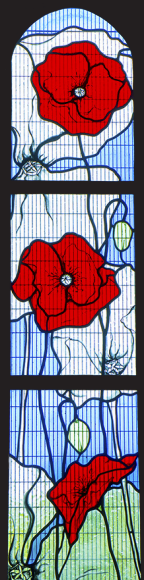
**Rifleman Arthur George Castle**, of Station Road, Launton.

Died: 25<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 24      Served in: King's Royal Rifle Corps

**Private William George Hopcraft**, of Chesterton.

Died: 29<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 24      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Cont...



**Private Albert Douglas East**, of Bicester.

Died: 30<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 18      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Lance Corporal Joseph Smith**, of Mill Street, Islip.

Died: 30<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 19      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private William John Swetman**, of The Green, Souldern.

Died: 30<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 18      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private William Samuel Waddup**, of Fritwell.

Died: 30<sup>th</sup> July 1916      Aged: 40      Served in: Royal Warwickshire Regiment

**Private Hubert Victor Sperrin**, of Hampton Poyle.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 18      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Trevor Sidney Tuffrey**, native of Islip.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 21      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Walter Thomas Westbury**, of The Green, Souldern.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1916      Aged: 18      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry



## Summer Walks & Outings

This summer we are continuing our programme of village and countryside walks with Adderbury and Middle Barton.

Adderbury's village walk will take place on the 31st July, starting at 2:30pm, and the countryside walk will be on the 14th August, at 2pm.

Middle Barton's village walk will take place on the 11th September, at 2:30pm, and the countryside walk

will be on the 25th September, at 2pm.

There is a charge of £6 per person for each walk, but that does include afternoon tea at the end.

Forms will be sent out soon with specific details for each walk (meeting place, distance, etc) for anyone who wants to sign up to them. Unfortunately these walks are for members only.

We are also planning a group outing to visit the Oxfordshire Museum, in Woodstock. This will include the special 50th anniversary exhibition mentioned in last month's newsletter.

Hopefully this will take place week commencing the 15th August, but specific details will follow shortly.

## Marj's Memories Primrose Cottage

For many years from the thirties, Primrose Cottage, in George Street was the home of the Hayes family. It had character, like the lovely house that is there now which still has a lot of the original building. It was the home of Mr and Mrs Hayes and their daughter, who we knew as Miss Hayes.

The cottage had a pretty, hilly garden and, beyond, an orchard, now Orchard Way. There was a lean-to at the far end of the cottage, where apples were stored and it was in there that we used to go to buy some. The aroma from newly picked apples can never be forgotten, and Mr Hayes would come and weigh the apples on large cast iron scales with weights. It was a regular thing for children to go in and buy apples that had fallen from the trees, for very little money. What pleasure in war time to go and get some fallers, take them further up Bucknell Road and sit on the grass verge and nosh!

Miss Hayes was a Sunday school teacher at St Edburg's Church, often going to and fro on her 'bike'.



The picture shows the cottage in the 1930's before the Land Army hostel was built where the Highfield Social Club is now.

- Marjorie Dean MBE



## 5th July 1856

TO PARTIES IN SEARCH OF A HOUSE IN BICESTER KING'S END PARISH - The Advertiser having purchased a piece of land, very pleasantly situated, and fronting the Turnpike Road in Bicester King's End parish, (in which it should be understood the rates and taxes are comparatively nothing) purposes erecting several GENTEEL RESIDENCES, comprising 2 front parlours, kitchen, back ditto, &c. &c. and 4 good bedrooms. Each house will have a nice piece of garden in front, and a brick-walled garden at the back.

As houses of this class are seldom, if ever, met with in Bicester, particularly in King's End parish, parties desirous of occupying such private dwelling houses, by applying to the advertiser, (at the office of this paper) might have their wishes consulted in the erection of their residences.

Arrangements are made for having the houses covered in, and the rooms plastered early in October, as being of brick they will very shortly afterwards be fit to be occupied. Each house will have a back draught entrance. Stabling, &c., put up if required.

## 24th July 1896

SUMMER HOLIDAYS - The annual summer holidays in connection with the Bicester National Schools will commence on Friday next, July 31st.

HARVEST HOLIDAYS - The School Attendance Committee of the Bicester Union have fixed the time of exemption from elementary schools in their district during the gathering of crops as from Monday next, July 27th, till Monday September 7th.

SCHOOL TREAT - The adjourned treat to the scholars attending the Congregational Sunday School was held yesterday (Thursday). It will be remembered that rain interfered with the children's enjoyment on the previous Thursday and for that reason the sports were postponed.

Assembling at five o'clock yesterday the scholars marched to the same field in Launton Road, again kindly placed at their disposal by H. Tubb Esq. On arrival there tea and cake were supplied, after which games and races were freely promoted. The latter took place on a prepared course and excellent prizes were awarded, competition being keen.

At the conclusion of the races Mrs F. Smith presented the prizes to successful competitors. Messrs. Stevens' string band played a selection of music during the course of the evening.

At dusk the delightful holiday was concluded by ringing cheers for Mr Tubb, Mrs Smith, Mr W.E. Smith (the indefatigable secretary of the school, who had made most complete preparations for the enjoyment of the children) etc.

## 10th July 1936

METHODIST'S GARDEN FETE - Rain marred the proceedings at the Methodist garden fete yesterday (Thursday) Mr G. Layton, J.P., C.C. having again placed his grounds in London Road at the disposal of the committee. The baby show was conducted in St Edburg's Hall, to where the utensils for tea, etc. had to be hurriedly transferred. In the unavoidable absence of Mrs E. Bishop,

of Oxford, the Rev. W. Small opened the proceedings and mentioned that the event was in aid of the building fund — which was now down to £270 — and the trust fund.

Despite the enforced hurried change of venue the hall was soon a busy scene of activity, chief centre of interest being the baby show, for which an entry of 68 had been received. Nurse D.M. Thomas organised this, assisted by Miss W. Liddington, and Nurse Rickards, of Aynho, acted as judge.

The tea tables were daintily arranged round the room and teas and refreshments were in charge of Mesdames Harcourt Smith, N.G. Prentice, Tinniswood, F. Blencowe, W.T. Wilkins, E. Richards, W. Bannister, W. Massey, S.G. Hedges, Adams, P.H.G. Lane, F. Jenkins, Misses M. Bellam, G. Webster, N. Neal, etc.

Mrs W. Rose and Miss F. Bellam had charge of the provisions Stall; Miss Plant the sweets; Mrs W.J.T. Small, toys; Misses V. Coles and G. Jackson, ices; Miss C. Scrivener and Mr W. Smith, fruit, vegetables, etc. The duties at the door were undertaken by Messrs. F. Blencowe, J. Richardson, W. Rose, R. Harvey and D. Derry.

Other helpers were the Misses Alley, H. Golder, R. Wilkins, J. Ayres, J. Hedges, R. Powell and M. Evans.

The baby show results were as follows:

Best in show — Margaret Georgina Ward, daughter of Mr and Mrs P. Ward, of Woodfield, Bicester.

Three to six months — 1 Barbara Golder, 2 Michael Trinder, 3 Pamela Haggerty.

Six to twelve months — 1 Susan Dean, 2 Jenny Bowman, 3 Anthony Gardiner.

Twelve to eighteen months — 1 Cecil Pinchin, 2 David Siddall, 3 Raymond Murnane.

Eighteen months to two years — 1 Margaret Georgina Ward, 2 Ronald Hughes, 3 Yvonne Marriott.

Two to three years — 1 Margaret Waddington, 2 Doreen Pike, 3 Joyce Golder.

Three to four years — Aubrey Smith.

Four to five years — 1 Jeannette Clifton, 2 Diana Osborne.

Consolations — Ann Williams, Patricia Upstone, Keith Grace, Maureen Taylor, Margaret Walton, Patricia Golder, Ronald Timms, Jean Golder and to the only twins in the show — Jack and Reginald Tingey.

At the close Nurse Rickards spoke on the excellent entry and condition of the babies and she was accorded a hearty vote of thanks and cheers for her efficient duties as judge. She was then presented with a bouquet of sweet peas by little Jeannette Clifton.

The organiser of the baby show wishes to return grateful thanks to the following, for generously giving prizes — Jaegar and Chilprufe Co.'s; the makers of Cow and Gate, Ovaltine, Tryfood, Virol and Glaxo foods, etc., and Messrs. Allen and Hanbury, Robinson's, Simpkins and Harringtons. Also the several local people who also contributed to the prizes.

Several helpers had been detailed to take charge of the various competitions, arranged by Mr S.G. Hedges which were to have been held on the lawn, but these proceedings had to be cancelled in view of the weather, and the attendants lent help in various ways in the hall.

*Cont...*

## 1st July 1976

QUEEN FOR THE CARNIVAL - Girls, girls, girls — your chance to sail into the title of Miss Bicester has come round again. The search for a new Bicester carnival queen is now on.

Bicester Rugby Club is again organising the contest for the town's tenth annual carnival, to be held on the Late Summer Holiday (August 30th).

This year the organisers are reverting to the system of running heats, so that young women on the finals night cannot size up the opposition before entering.

Heats are at dance-discos at Bicester Sports Club on Saturday evenings July 10th and 17th. The final is on Saturday, July 24th, and the first prize is £25.

Any young woman can enter and all they have to do is to give their name at the door when they will be given a number to wear on their wrist.

Alternatively any girls wanting to notify their entry beforehand could contact Mr Ken Haddock at Bicester 43421 (Noke Engineering) during the day or at home at Bicester 41871.

Judging is quite simple. It is basically by appearance. There is no formal line-up and no interview. A panel of judges drawn from sports club personnel just observe the entrants throughout the evening — so the judges are unknown to the entrants. Mr Haddock tells me this system worked well a couple of years ago.

## Buildings of Bicester Quiz

At the Big Lunch this year we put on a display related to our new DVD about Bicester's architectural heritage (due for release in September). We displayed a collection of close-up photographs of five different buildings in the town and asked people to identify which buildings they were.

Very few people got all five correct, can you do any better? Answers will be published in next month's newsletter.

Building 1:



Building 2:



Building 3:



Building 4:



Building 5:





## Talks Update

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

### 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 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**.

### Monday 17th October

Kate Tiller tells us about The Oxfordshire Historical Atlas Project in a talk titled **Anatomy of a County**. Illustrating major themes in Oxfordshire's history, from Roman settlement to the M40.

## Backyards of Bicester Walk

On Sunday 10th July Bob Hessian led a walk as part of the official opening celebrations for Bicester Library. Town walks have become a regular feature in our programme of summer events for townsfolk and members alike, but this put a slightly different slant on the town's history and explored areas of the town often overlooked.

Bicester is well-known for its numerous yards and alleyways, some of which can still be glimpsed behind the properties in Sheep Street, Market Square and Chapel Street, to name a few.

The origins and uses of these yards and alleyways range from yards for stables behind coaching



inns, such as the King's Arms or the Fox Inn; areas of poor housing where accommodation can only be described as 'hovels', such as Victoria Row and Albert Terrace in the Crockwell area; or business uses, such as the Tebby's Yard or the Eclipse Mineral Water Yard behind Causeway.

Some of these yards have completely disappeared and we can only speculate where they were situated. Others have been overtaken by development: the nature of Wheatsheaf Yard has changed from one connected to the business of a public house, which is remembered for providing accommodation for cyclists, to a cut-through to Pioneer Square. Tubb's Yard, accessed from Chapel Street and running behind the south side of the Market Square, reminds us of the time prior to 1920 when Henry Tubb sold his bank to Barclay's.

Alleyways also provide a



Crumps Butts - 1975

glimpse into the town's past. Was Crump's Butts a reminder of the compulsory practise of archery by men in the mediaeval period? Is Twitcher's Alley named after local character Bird Stuffer Smith or, perhaps, a corruption of the word twitchel, meaning an alley? Long-standing residents call this alleyway 'The Tewel', a name common in Oxfordshire although spellings vary widely.

Why not explore the backways of Bicester and see what hidden corners you can discover?

- Sally James

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