

A Spooky Tale

The following story is taken from 'Anecdotes 2: Bicester' by John Dunkin, September 1826 (edited, but with Dunkin's original grammar and spelling).

James Jagger was a natural child, brought up by Mr George Gurden and his wife from an infant, who, having no children, adopted him as their own. At a proper age, Mr Gurden taught him his own business, that of a slipper, clog, and pattin-maker, and it is probable this sedentary life led him, in moments of relaxation, to amuse himself with reading. Bicester was never noted for facilities of literature, and it appears that the few books which fell into his hands were chiefly works upon heraldry. Awakened to look beyond his neighbours, he became desirous of some further knowledge of the earth on which he trod, and the stars above his head. Excepting the learned parson of the parish, Jagger had never heard of anyone in Bicester who had the least pretention to learning besides Dick Dodd and John Haines, who had made themselves notorious by jointly compiling an Almanac. Dodd got involved in a lawsuit and was compelled to leave the town, but Haines readily undertook his instruction. A pair of globes and a telescope were procured and the master and scholar went on harmoniously until the death of the former about 1792.

Jagger's interest in astrology led to him being used to try to raise the Devil. The invocation of spirits proceeded, according to the best authorities, up to a certain point when a horrid form covered with black hair and having huge horns, suddenly presented itself before him and endeavoured to seize him. Half dead with terror, he instantly fled, and a loud explosion was heard, which his confidants affirmed was a clap of thunder in which the devil flew away carrying the top of one of their chimnies with him. They afterwards acknowledged that the spectre was no other than Charles Parkins drest in a bull's hide, and sent in to frighten Jagger.

One would have thought the ridicule attached to this transaction would have completely cured him of all magical

propensities – and so it did for a time, at least publicly: though he has often assured the writer that he continued to practice the invocation of demons until he became such an adept that the spirits instantly appeared at his call!

The lapse of years generated an opinion that his knowledge might be rendered useful, if directed toward the discovery of thieves and recovery of property by superhuman agency. Accordingly, one night being at the Rose and Crown public house, Mrs. Saunders, the landlady, having lost a silver clasp, asked Jagger if he could "conjure for it." Jagger assured her he could, and promised to restore the article, if she would set a tub of water in the passage, allow him to perform his incantations in the adjoining parlour, and secure him from interruption. At last a splash was heard, and the magician called for the landlady to examine the tub - where the clasp was found.

Jagger was, however, confoundedly frightened, and soon returned home. Just as he reached his foster-father's dwelling, the turnpike-house, he found himself suddenly raised from the ground, and borne over the tops of the lofty trees in Coker's close, by the hair of his head and an unseen hand.

In this way he appeared hurried forward, attended by numerous shapeless creatures, which, as they passed along, gradually assumed a form somewhat like asses, with panniers on their backs. From the elevation necessary to clear the trees, he was gradually lowered in Kings-end field, dragged along through bushes, hedges, ditches and ponds, until he was half-drowned, his clothes almost torn from his back, and his body bleeding from innumerable scratches.

In this horrid company, he passed the whole night, none of the demons leaving him till daylight, when he was discovered by some labourers, almost dying with fear, in Kirtlington-bottom, about four miles distant from Bicester. Seeing him in this deplorable plight, one of them compassionately accompanied him home.

- Gill King

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Dates For Your Diary

Museum Resource Centre Open House
16th October - 10am
see page 5

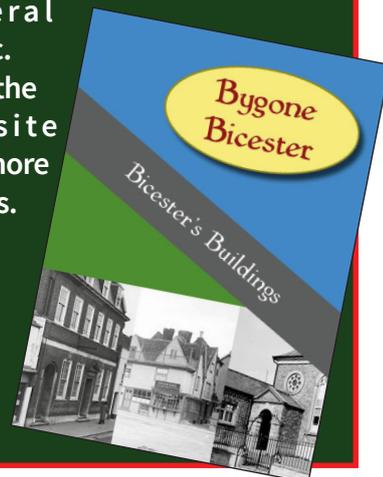
Anatomy of a County Talk
17th October - 7:30pm
see page 5

November Newsletter Submissions Deadline
4th November

St Edburg's Foundation AGM
- With a talk about the restoration of the church building
14th November - 7pm

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Our new DVD, **Bicester's Buildings**, is on sale now. £5 to members or £6 to the general public. See the website for more details.



Village History Hethe

The village of Hethe lies about 4.5 miles north of Bicester.

Before and after the Norman Conquest Wulfward the White, a thegn of King Edward the Confessor's Queen Edith, owned the manor of Hethe. However, by 1086 William the Conqueror had granted the manor to Geoffrey de Montbray, who was both Bishop of Coutances and also one of William's senior military commanders.

By the 12th century the manor belonged to the Earls of Gloucester, with whom it stayed until the 4th Earl of Gloucester died without a successor in 1314. In 1347 the manor passed to the 1st Earl of Stafford, and it remained with the Staffords, who from 1402 were also Dukes of Buckingham, until 1521 when Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham, was executed for treason and his properties were attained to the Crown.

At some time after 1167 St Bartholomew's Hospital in London was given a hide of land at Hethe. In 1537 the hospital was dissolved under the dissolution of the monasteries and the Crown seized all its lands. But in 1547 the hospital was refounded and retained its holding at Hethe, until at least 1682.

The Church of England parish church of Saint Edmund and Saint George is known to have existed by 1154, when it was given to the Augustinian Priory at Kenilworth. Both the west wall of the nave and the south wall of the chancel survive from this time, each retaining a Norman lancet window and the latter a priest's doorway from the same period.

The east end of the chancel was rebuilt early in the 13th century when a Decorated Gothic east window was inserted. In the 15th century a Perpendicular Gothic clerestory was added to the nave.

When the Abbey was dissolved in 1538 the advowson of Hethe passed to the Crown, which has retained it ever since. In 1854 Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, complained that the



St Edmund & St George Church

church was "in a most miserable order" and "utterly too small for the population" and in 1859 the Gothic Revival architect G.E. Street restored the building, widened the chancel arch and added the bell-turret and the north aisle. Street also moved the Decorated Style east window from the chancel to the north aisle and inserted a new east window in the chancel in its place.

In the first half of the 16th century William Fermor, of Somerton, bought the manor of Hardwick, 1 mile west of Hethe, in 1606 Sir Richard Fermor bought the neighbouring manor of Tusmore and in 1625 the Fermor family moved to Tusmore from Somerton. The Fermors were a recusant family who had their own Roman Catholic chapel, a family priest and employed Catholic staff whom they allowed to attend Mass in their family chapel. The Fermors supported Catholic communities who farmed their lands at Godington, Hardwick and Somerton.

At some time the Fermors acquired land at Hethe, and in 1676 ten Catholics working for the Fermors were living there. A Roman Catholic population numbering less than ten survived in Hethe throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, some but not all of them working for the Fermors. They attended Mass at the chapel in Tusmore until the Fermors closed it for refurbishment in 1768. Thereafter they attended Mass at a

chapel in Hardwick created in the attic of the manor house, but the Fermors sold the manor in 1828 and the new owner closed the chapel in 1830. In 1832 the priest from Hardwick had Holy Trinity church built at Hethe to serve the Roman Catholic population there and in surrounding villages.

By 1794 Hethe had a small Methodist congregation. They built their first chapel in 1854 and replaced this with a second one in 1876. The latter was still being used as a chapel in 1955 but is now a private house.

Hethe has a public house which, until the early 19th century, was called the Maltster's Arms. It was then renamed the Whitmore Arms, after Thomas Whitmore who lived at Hethe House between 1808 and 1811. It has been a Grade II listed building since 1988 and became The Muddy Duck in 2012.

A National School was built in the village in 1852, and enlarged in 1874. In 1924 it was reorganised as a junior school and in 1948 it was reorganised again as an infant school. In 1954 it was still open as a Church of England school, but it was later closed.

In 1831 land was bought to build a Roman Catholic school. Building work was begun, but problems arose and the construction was not completed until 1870, when it opened as St Philip's School. By 1920 it was an infant school, and in 1924 it was closed.

- Matthew Hathaway

Marj's Memories The Allotments

In the forties, and for some years following, it was common for people in Bicester to have allotments as well as gardens. Most men in those days provided vegetables to feed the family all year round. The potatoes were brought home in sacks, often lodged across the frame of a bike and wheeled home by foot.

The allotments in Leach Road looked very much how they are today, but no proper road or traffic calming because there were no houses, just the old workhouse nearby. There were several sites with wonderful vegetables growing and men were proud to show off their produce and there was friendly competition about who dug up the first potatoes and other things like the biggest marrow or cauliflower. There was a lot of pride in onion beds.

Glory Farm was one of the largest allotments site where my dad had his "2 chain of allotment", the length of a cricket pitch twice. We cycled through Bell

Lane and Bardwell along a mud track, and then into the railway tunnel, which had a pebbly, bumpy surface and was very dark. As we emerged into daylight there was a large pond on the right where the men filled their buckets to water the plants. I sometimes went down there with my dad. We would share a bottle of cold tea and my treat would be a carrot that he had pulled up and scraped for me. Some of the work seemed tedious, such as weeding the onion bed or pulling up the stumps where the Brussel sprouts had grown.

There was always a row of sweet william flowers at the top of our "lotment", alongside the grass path where people often walked on a Sunday evening and bunches would be given to some of the ladies. The reason they were grown was to attract the bees to set the peas and beans. I still have my sweet williams along the edge of my garden to this day.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

Bygone Bicester (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

11th October 1856

THE GOOD OLD TIMES, WHEN WERE THEY? - This was the subject of a lecture given by the Rev. T.C. Whitehead, of Gawcott, to the members of the Bicester Literary Institution. This is the third time that the Rev. gentleman has opened the session for this society.

The lecturer explained his theme in a very able manner, and in order to find the "good old times" commenced his search as far back as the Saxon monarchy, and continued his investigation throughout the Norman, Middle Age and Elizabethan periods, and lastly made a diligent search for them in time not far distant. He was at no loss to find times of despotism, pillage, heresy, famine, plagues, slavery, superstition, *et hoc genus omne*, but failed to discover good times during any of these periods.

He considered that "good times" were those which afforded the greatest amount of true happiness to the greatest number of persons; and he observed that although many imperishable men of science and learning had lived in past times, still the state of the population at large was anything but satisfactory, and the education of the higher classes as a body at a very low standard. He believed that times when property was unprotected, when civil war raged, when subjects were continually violating the law of God and man, could not be possibly called good old times.

In conclusion he contended that the present times of improvement were far superior to any old times; and instanced the invention of the steam engine, the advanced state of education, the abolition of oppressive laws, and continued extension of true civil and religious liberty as evidence of better times than the past.

The lecturer was loudly applauded when he sat down. The Rev. J. Whittaker proposed a vote of thanks, Mr Johnson seconded, and the vote was carried unanimously.

23rd October 1896

MICHAELMAS FAIR - Our second Michaelmas Fair was held on the Market Place on Friday last. The weather throughout the day was most unpleasant, and in the opinion of some of the oldest inhabitants the fair was in every respect the meanest they had ever witnessed.

There were a few stalls certainly, one roundabout, and an old friend who usually turns up on such occasions - an earthenware dealer.

The attendance too was most meagre, indeed one could scarcely realise it was our second Michaelmas fair. For years past the fair has been gradually dwindling, and if you can form any opinion upon that of last Friday we can safely predict that Michaelmas fairs in Bicester will soon be events of the past.

23rd October 1936

HOCKEY - The Bicester Hockey Club have commenced their season, and despite an obvious lack of practice among the members, one or two games have already been enjoyed.

On Saturday the men were defeated 8-3 at Aylesbury, by Hazell's, but played throughout the first half two short, owing to two of the team going to the Town ground and there changing, under the impression the game was with that club

The ladies had a good match with the Marsh Gibbon ladies, and won 4-0, the scorers being Miss M. Boulter and Miss M. Phipps, two each.

A number of attractive matches has been arranged, both on Thursdays and Saturdays, for ladies and men, and anyone desirous of joining the club should get into touch with either Mr A.J. Evans, the general secretary, or Mr P.L.C. Holiday or Miss G. Jackson, the match secretaries.

Cont...

13th October 1976

ANNE AND MARK RIDE IN CROSS-COUNTRY - Princess Anne and her husband Capt. Mark Phillips rode into second place in the Bicester and Warden Hill Hunt Wipac Cross-Country Team Event at Newton Morrell on Sunday.

The two were surprise entrants as they put in for the event only two days before. They rode as the penultimate team out of around 30 under the name of the Beaufort Hunt number two team.

Although experienced cross-country riders, their team could have been handicapped as they only had one other rider, Miss Venetia Salmon, a member of the Beaufort.

All other teams had four riders and teams were timed on the third rider home, so Princess Anne and Capt. Phillips could not afford to lose any time or a rider.

They rode the course at a fast pace and covered over two miles and 19 fences - including a water jump - in a time of 4 minutes 41 seconds, only five seconds behind the winners, the Beaufort Hunt number one team. Third



were the Pytchley Hunt, fourth were the Bicester and Warden Hill Hunt Pony Club and fifth were the Bucks Brigade.

Afterwards Princess Anne received the £100 second prize from Mr Michael Jarman, a director of the Wipac Group of Buckingham, sponsors of the event.

Christmas Tree Festival Appeal

Our theme for this year's tree will be celebrating the society's 30th anniversary and its members. We need your old photographs, of yourselves, taken around 1986.

They'll be used to decorate the tree, which you'll be able to see on display in St Edburg's Church, as part of

their Christmas Tree Festival, between the 9th and 11th December.

Email us digital copies, or lend us print ones that we'll scan and return. We need them as soon as possible, but no later than Monday 21st November!

Roll of Honour

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

Private James Henry Hayward, of Kirtlington.

Died: 1st October 1916 Aged: 24 Served in: Machine Gun Corps

Corporal Alec Stuart Marshall, of Islip.

Died: 1st October 1916 Aged: 27 Served in: Royal Army Service Corps

Lance Corporal Sidney Kirtland, native of Merton.

Died: 4th October 1916 Aged: 33 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Thomas Arthur Grantham, of Bicester.

Died: 7th October 1916 Aged: 22 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Wilfred Clarence Golby, native of Middleton Stony.

Died: 7th October 1916 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private George Frederick Davies, native of Finmere.

Died: 12th October 1916 Aged: 36 Served in: Royal Fusiliers

Sergeant Gordon Cecil Bazeley, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 13th October 1916 Aged: 22 Served in: Durham Light Infantry

Private Harry George Hinton, of Stoke Lyne.

Died: 20th October 1916 Aged: 24 Served in: Wiltshire Regiment

Sergeant Thomas George Ayris, of Bicester.

Died: 24th October 1916 Aged: 26 Served in: Rifle Brigade

Private Archibald Simons, of Launton.

Died: 24th October 1916 Aged: 20 Served in: Middlesex Regiment



Talks Update

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

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.

Monday 21st November

Tim Healey visits us again, this time to talk about **Drovers' Roads in Oxfordshire & Beyond**.

Monday 19th December

This will be our **Members Festive Social Event**.

The Museums Resource Centre Open House



Sunday 16th October 2016

10am - 4pm

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