



# Village History Middleton Stoney

The village of Middleton Stoney lies about 2 miles west of Bicester. The western boundary of the parish follows Aves Ditch, a 3 mile long pre-Saxon ditch and bank structure which is believed to have been used as both a Roman boundary dyke and an Anglo-Saxon field boundary.

The current village is based around the crossroads of two main roads. The north-south road used to be the main road between Oxford and Brackley. In the 1920s it was classified as the A43, but in the 1990s the M40 motorway was completed and the stretch of the A43 through Middleton Stoney was reclassified as the B430. The east-west road is the main road between Bicester and Enstone. In 1797 an Act of Parliament made this road into a turnpike. It was disturnpiked in the 19th century and in the 20th century it was classified as the B4030.

In 1086 the manor was held by Richard Puignant, a Norman tenant in chief of whom little else is known. In the mid 12th century it was in the hands of Richard de Carnville, who was almost certainly responsible for building the castle which was located next to the parish church.

The earliest reference to a castle on this site dates from 1194, but it was probably built before this. In 1216 King John ordered its destruction and there is no evidence to suggest that it was ever re-fortified.

Just to the west of the castle



Excavation of the castle in 1973.

there was a medieval deer park whose creation was authorised by King John in 1201. In 1203 the king gave deer from Woodstock Park to stock it. This was later followed by gifts of deer from Beckley Park and Wychwood Forest. In 1295, 11s 8d was paid to the King's huntsmen for catching wolves in the park. The boundary of the park still shows as a bank and ditch surrounding the present Middleton House estate.

The medieval manor house was originally built within the inner bailey of the castle, after it had been destroyed. Nicholas Harman is said to have built a "commodious residence"

near the site of the castle. It is therefore possible that Nicholas Harman built onto a more ancient dwelling. This house survived as a farmhouse until the early 19th

century. The desertion of the old manor house in favour of an isolated mansion in its own grounds appears to have occurred in the early 18th century, when Middleton Park House was built within the area of the medieval deer park, which was by then landscaped. This house was destroyed by fire in 1753 and replaced by a "handsome brick structure". This building survived in a much altered form until 1938, when the ninth earl of Jersey demolished it in order to build a new house designed by Sir Edwin and Mr Robert Lutyens. This last house, which still remains today, was one of the last country houses to be built as such in England.

The original village was built around the castle and church. But, in the early 19th Century, George Child Villiers, 5th Earl of Jersey, set about the expansion of the manor park and the extinction of the old village. The eastward extension of the park was completed in 1825, when the old manor house and adjoining cottages were demolished, leaving the church and castle mound isolated between the mansion and the park gates. New cottages were built on the edge of the park, now forming the nucleus of the present village, under the direction of Lady Jersey. Each cottage had a rustic porch and a flower garden, conveying to one contemporary observer "an idea of comfort and respectability seldom enjoyed by the working classes".

- Matthew Hathaway



All Saints Church

## 16th May 1863

TREAT TO THE UNION CHILDREN - On Tuesday last, the children of this house went to Captain Dewar's at Middleton Stoney, accompanied by their respective teachers, where a most delightful treat was prepared for them, consisting of cake and tea; toys of all descriptions were also given to them.

On account of the rain the outdoor amusements could not be fully carried out. However, when the rain had a little abated, the lawn was soon covered with the delighted little visitors, who enjoyed themselves in all sorts of games, but in all their mirth showing that though they were only workhouse children they knew how to make proper use of a holiday.

When the games were ended, they were again treated with cake and tea, and a book suitable to each, was kindly presented to them. Before leaving, the National Anthem was sung by the children and all present.

The children were all treated with a ride home in a covered conveyance, provided by Captain Dewar, and the pleasant termination to the festivities added much to their enjoyment.

## 5th May 1905

THE CUCKOO AND SWALLOWS - The cuckoo was first heard within the precincts of the village of Lower Heyford on Friday morning last, April 28th, but it had been heard in the neighbourhood a week or so earlier.

The swallows were twittering on the housetops on May 3rd, but a stray one or two were observed previous to Friday last. The nightingale was singing in the neighbourhood last Saturday.

## 9th May 1947

SHELTER DEMOLITION - The demolition of the air raid shelters has begun. After the very long period which has elapsed - over two years - since the first tender for the work was submitted and turned down, we can hardly believe that at last there are hopes for the removal of these obstructions to further road improvements.

From the information one gleaned when a certain contractor's tender had been submitted, special machinery was to be used in the demolition process, but apparently Messrs Aubrey Watson and Son's men, who began the "assault" on the shelters yesterday (Thursday) morning, are relying on their own strength and ingenuity on the Sheep Street building; The Market Square erection will be a much more difficult proposition.

The shelters were erected in 1940, and residents in the vicinity of both will welcome their disappearance.

## 19th May 1989

WELCOME TOWN TRAIL - Schoolchildren and newcomers often want to find out more about the town, so a Bicester Town Trail will be welcomed by many.

Bicester Local History Society has published the trail giving a brief description of the town and its development plus a map and index to buildings of interest.

Bob Hessian, secretary, said the society was planning an enlarged version, giving more details of the town and buildings. "We got this one out quickly in time for the recent Environment Week and it is designed for schools and newcomers wanting a short introduction to Bicester. While this trail is free, we shall have to charge for the next bigger edition." said Mr Hessian.

He agreed that it might be slightly confusing in the leaflet to describe a stone building on the corner of London Road and Priory Road as St Edburg's Hall. While indeed the building was the parish church hall, it has not been since it was sold by the church to help pay for the new one in Old Place Yard, which is due to be demolished soon to make way for flats and a smaller hall.

Similarly, the trail pinpoints another building at the corner of Priory Road and Priory Lane as: Catholic Church: Bicester's first. Again true, but the Roman Catholic church now stands where Church Street and the Causeway join. The first Catholic church is now the Priory Day Nursery School and the home of the Elis Christian Centre.

Copies of Bicester Town Trail can be obtained free from the public library in Old Place Yard.

## Marj's Memories

### The Typing School in Oxford

In 1951 at 16 years old, when I was working as a clerk in Arncott Depot, I was lucky to be able to go to Typing School for 3 months. I went with a friend that I was working with.

We went by train to Oxford (old) station then took a bus ride up to Marston Ferry Road to The Ministry of Food where the Government Typing Training Centre was located. We worked hard learning all aspects of typewriting, but the main object was to get up to a 30 words a minute speed. If you have heard the record called "The Typewriter" that is exactly how it was. We had to learn the "home bank" of keys first and practise over and over again, pounding the old Imperial manual typewriter until the brain told the fingers where to go. Various gramophone records were played on a wind-up gramophone and at the end of each line a voice

would say "carriage return" and using our left hands we would all clang back the carriages in unison. We typed from manuscripts with tabulations incorporated in them as well as speed tests. There was no back-spacing to correct an error like we have on computers today. We also did spelling tests and vocabulary.

It was a lovely summer and in the lunch-hour, with the friends we had made, we sometimes went for walks along Marston Ferry Road. It was pretty in those days and off the road was a stream that we sometimes went paddling in.

It was there that we took our various exams to get higher grades. I was in the middle of a Proficiency Test on 6th February 1952 when the examiner pressed the stop watch and told us to stop typing to announce that the news had just come through that the King had died.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

# Roll of Honour

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

**Private Sidney Blencowe**, native of Souldern.

Died: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917      Aged: 34      Served in: Australian Infantry

**Private Frank Waddup**, of Fritwell.

Died: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917      Aged: 26      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private William Frederick Robbins**, of Souldern.

Died: 8<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 29      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private William Tuffrey Turner**, of Ambrosden.

Died: 8<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 20      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Ernest Wood**, of Field Street, Bicester.

Died: 9<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 21      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Commander Robert Gerald Fane**, of Bicester House, Bicester.

Died: 15<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 35      Served in: Royal Navy - HMS Dartmouth

**Private Alfred Powell**, of Hadland's Yard, Bicester.

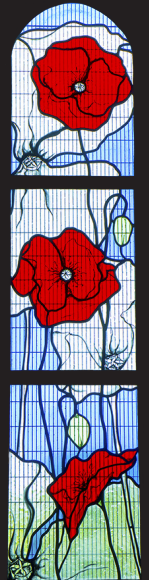
Died: 16<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 25      Served in: Army Ordnance Corps

**Private George Newton Buswell**, of Horton-cum-Studley.

Died: 20<sup>th</sup> May 1917      Aged: 24      Served in: Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars

**Private William Egerton**, of North Street, Bicester.

Died: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1917      Aged: 19      Served in: Royal Warwickshire Regiment



## Talks Update

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

### Monday 15th May

Liz Woolley returns once again to talk to us about **Local History and How to do it.**

### Monday 19th June

Carol Anderson gives us her talk about **Glove Making in Oxfordshire.**

### Monday 17th July

Deborah Hayter tells us about **The Peripatetic Poor in the 18th Century.**

## Roman Pottery Industry Talk

For April's talk Dr Christopher Young told us about a major pottery industry that existed in the Oxford region during the Roman period, with the height of production being around AD 250-400.

We can identify the various uses for pottery, which included tableware, cooking, storage and the transport of commodities such as oil and wine (amphoras). Unlike other materials, pottery is very durable, so that a catalogue of differing shapes, uses and places of origin has been established. It provides evidence of trade routes and commerce more generally.

The availability of raw materials such as lower green sand; grit; white clay (rare deposits at Shotover); ochre (also at Shotover); water and fuel, and good communications, influenced the location of kilns.

The exchange and sale of goods



from the production site at Boars Hill to the Roman settlement at Abingdon has been established. Larger kilns produced goods which were transported via the River Thames to London or by road to the rest of Britain.

Evidence of the industry in this area was first identified at Headington Wick in 1850; Sandford 1870s; Rose Hill 1930s. However, the extent of production and distribution was not fully recognised until the 1960s.

Christopher's objectives for archaeological investigations included classifying wares; typology; chronology; conditions of production and distribution. He undertook digs at the Churchill Hospital site, Yarnton and St Luke's Road Telephone Exchange in the 1970s. Other kiln sites have been discovered at Noke, Nuneham Courtenay and Greater Leys since this time.

AD 240-250 ~ New wares were introduced – parchment ware and red colour-coated ware.

AD 350 onwards ~ More decoration and new designs – flagons, beakers, bowls.

Pots began to be stamped with the



name of the potter. Although most were an illiterate combination of lines and dots, one reads 'Patern'.

Questions raised include:

- Where does pottery fit in the landscape? (Ans: In the field system as part of the agricultural activity. Pottery production didn't happen in isolation from the rest of society).
- Where did potters live?
- Was it all year-round work?
- How were sites allocated to potters?
- Who owned the industry?
- Who was responsible for distribution?

Not all of these questions can be answered by archaeology.

When the Romans left Britain in AD 410, much of the technical expertise for pottery making was lost and markets disappeared.

## Committee & Contacts

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