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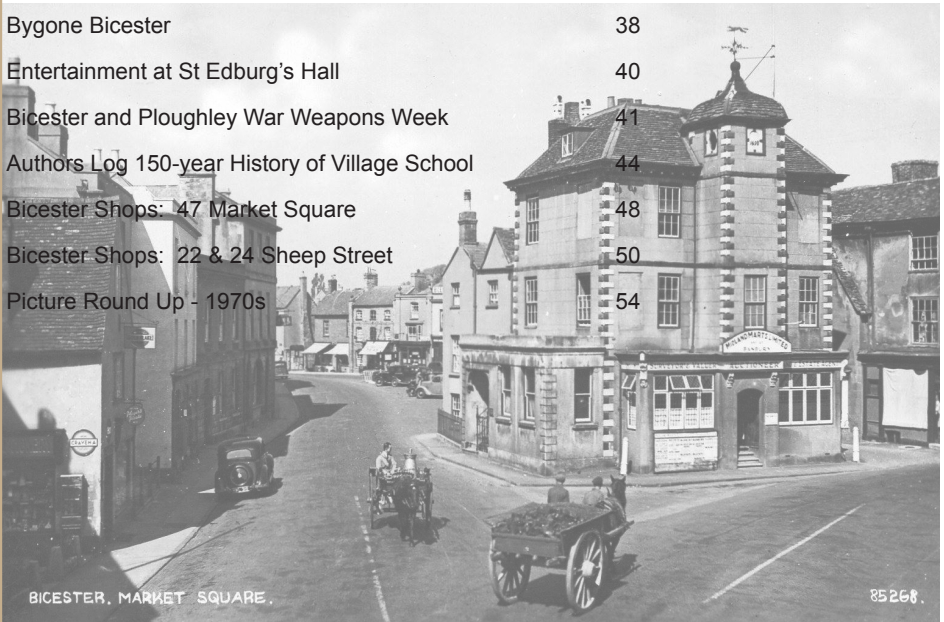
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Bicester's Boer War (Part 5)

Continuing the reminiscences of Lewis Turney

By Mark Lewandowski

The following day, Wednesday, 1st August 1900, he records that he received letters and two papers – it is not too great a leap of the imagination for these to have been the Bicester Herald and/or the Bicester Advertiser. In the days before long distance travel became common and not the preserve of the rich or of those on official business and 'home' was a long sea voyage away, any form of contact or news would have been most welcome. He might not have had much time to enjoy these as the following day his journal records that he "went to work at 2 p.m. parade for general fatigue making roads & building works". But that first weekend in August 1900 was not without its diversions. On Saturday, 4th, he mentions attending a cricket match between the camp and the locals. He records that the camp won the game but sadly does not give the score or, given the cricketing exploits of his youth, if he played. That it took place at all in the middle of a South African winter would have been an achievement in itself. An entry in the journal a few days later mentions that the weather was very cold with a sharp cutting wind. Hardly ideal conditions for the summer game. The following Monday was a Bank Holiday, and Lewis Turney records that there was an arms inspection at 10.30 a.m. after which "washing" occupied his time before writing a letter home in the afternoon and receiving his pay of £1.1s.0d.

It has been said that war is 90% boredom punctuated by 10% terror [there are various versions of this expression, but all express the same sentiment] and Lewis Turney's experience of the Boer War was no exception. His journal, still describing the events of the 7th August, takes up the narrative; after a fairly routine day of fatigues, "Alarm raised at 9 p.m. by the Orderly

Officer all had to turn out with belts, side arms & rifle with big coats on fall in in a moments notice on parade, charge magazines and wait for orders as the Kaffirs brought word into the town as the Boers were advancing on it, there were two rockets fired in the air but we had nothing to do after all. Received orders about 10.15 p.m. to go back to our tents & be ready to turn out at a moments notice, but the night went off quiet." [Although now not politically correct, at the time the expression "Kaffir" was used in a non-derogatory manner as an inoffensive way to describe black people, for example, as in the novels of Sir Henry Rider Haggard. It appears in the historical writings of anthropologists and other academic writings. In the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, many African artefacts were labelled as being "Kaffir" in origin.]

Two days later, Thursday 9th August 1900, it was back to the daily drudge. The Company paraded at 10.30 a.m. after which they went to fatigue duties. On the same day the journal records him receiving a welcome defence against the previously mentioned cold and sharp cutting wind in the form of a flannelette shirt, a pair of socks, a pair of gloves, and a woollen balaclava cap, presents sent from England to the troops in South Africa. A further reminder that he and his fellow brothers-in-arms had not been forgotten by the folks back home.

After the thankfully false alarm of the night of the 7th, the remainder of August appears to have passed quietly, as far as Lewis Turney was concerned. The remainder of his journal entries for that month list the endless military routine of parades, inspections, fatigue and picquet duties, broken only by the occasional receipt of items of correspondence from, and of despatch of the

same to Bicester. There is one entry that month that brought home the reality of the situation. On about the 18th August he and twelve men were instructed to go to the local hospital to collect the mortal remains of a man, possibly from the Essex Regiment who, Lewis Turney believed, had died.

The following day, Sunday, 19th August he records that the Anglican church parade was at 9.00 a.m. with that for the Roman Catholics and other denominations at 10.00 a.m. The following day he reports there being yet another parade for all available men in the camp with their mess tins for an inspection by the commanding officer. The company was later halved between outpost and inlying picquet duty with the defaulters at the tattoo parade, the final of the day at 8.30 p.m. ending with "Reported light out 8.45 p.m." The following day, Tuesday, 21st, he records being on battalion quarter guard, before writing two letters home, one to his wife, the other to a Mrs Morgan of Hethe. That day also featured a board held for lost and damaged equipment. At about 7.30 p.m. he records that Private Gregory of A Company was brought to the guard tent by Corporal Crowther of the same unit charged with being drunk in the camp. He was punished by being confined to barracks for eight days. There was a certain irony in the fact that on the same day Lewis Turney records that the company received an issue of rum. On Friday, 24th he records receiving a letter and paper from home, undoubtedly most welcome.

Back home there was some good news for those adversely affected by the War, as the Herald of the 24th August reported. Thanks to the generosity of the British public the London Mansion House War Fund had reached an important milestone. It stood at £1,001,000 – this, the Herald told its readers, was independent of the tens of thousands of pounds subscribed through other media.

The South African Conflict had an unexpected effect locally, and possibly nationally as well – in the naming of babies. The Advertiser of the 7th September reported that a son recently born to Farrier-Sergeant Charles and Sophie Boyles, of King's End, serving with the 40th (Oxfordshire) Company Imperial Yeomanry, had been christened Roberts Redvers, after Lord Roberts

*Patrol Parade 8.30pm
On Wednesday 29th Aug 1900
wrote a letter home to
England & Posted it
Co for Inlying Picquet
Parade for 4 at 2pm
Road Making & Co on
Outpost Duty & 2 Co on
Inlying Picquet myself
for the Road & very
wet day also thunder
& lightning & about 10 pm
it started to thunder
& lighten & rained in
to tents all the night
I got very wet Big coat*



Top: Diary entry for Wednesday 29th August 1900

Bottom: Lewis Turney in his uniform.

and Sir Redvers Buller, on the 25th November [sic] in St Edburg's Church. On the other hand, the daughter of William and Ellen Julyan, of Jubilee Terrace, baptised in the same font on the 26th August, received the names of Ellen Mafeking. [The obvious discrepancy regarding the dates in the Advertiser report 7th September, and that in the St Edburg's Parish Register 25th November, has been noted – but that is what the records say.] The short item closes with the sentiment that the memory of the war will likely never die out, for names such as these are sure to be handed on to future generations.

At about this time John East and family of Banbury Road in Bicester received a communication from the War Office about Private A. East of the Royal Army Medical Corps reporting that he had been slightly wounded at Lydenburg on the 7th of September with the reassurance that any changes in his condition will be relayed to them at once and that, if none is received, it may be assumed "that your son is progressing favourably". He had previously been through the siege of Ladysmith. The Advertiser goes on to report that Private H. Reeves, of the 1st Welsh Regiment, had not been so fortunate and had been invalided home because of injuries to his foot sustained while crossing the Modder River.

However, it was The Bicester Herald of Friday, the 14th September that carried the best news in a short, single sentence, item at the foot of its sixth page, received via the Central News Agency in Pretoria, that General Louis Botha, commander-in-chief of the Transvaal Boers, was making overtures for peace. He would go on to become the first Prime Minister of South Africa.

Thankfully, thus far Lewis Turney's war, apart from the occasional false alarm and drunken soldier, had been fairly uneventful, the seemingly endless routine of parades, inspections, fatigues and picket duties. This was not the case with Farrier-Sergeant Charles Boyles, of the 40th Company of Imperial Yeomanry as he related to his wife Sophie, mentioned above in the naming of babies after leaders in the conflict, in a letter dated Pontchestroom, 2nd August; "Just a line to let you know that I am safe after a very severe battle. On Thursday last we were in a most critical position. We had to take a large kopje on our right flank. Just as we were galloping across the open veldt the Boers opened fire upon us with pompom and big gun and we had to take cover immediately. It was then that my horse

gave in – quite done up. I was in the midst of shot and shell and could not get one way or the other for about an hour. Luckily I escaped. I can tell you I never want to be in such a perilous position again. We, however, gave it to the Boers hot. Our loss was one wounded and ten horses shot. We had some very narrow escapes. The Boers got to within 200 yards of us, and fortunately for us we were at this stage well under cover. We were fighting about seven hours in all, and this was the last fight we have been in. We had a skirmish the next day, losing one man wounded. We are at present at Pontchestroom and our future movement I am unable to say, but I hope, please God, I shall be home."

Sadly, the letter then goes on to describe what would today be called a war crime. Apparently one Corporal and a Sapper of the Royal Engineers accompanied by three native South Africans were sent out to repair some telegraph wires between Banks Station and Pontchestroom. They were unfortunate to be captured by the Boers, who made them stand in a row and riddled them with bullets. In addition, the Africans' throats were cut, and their brains were bashed out. Regretfully, although perhaps understandably, the letter hints at what may have been retaliatory action – it mentions the burning of several farms and the commandeering of their livestock.

He closes with the reassurance that two other Bicester men, Sergeants Goble, and King, were quite well.

On Wednesday, 29th August he mentions writing another letter home before being assigned to road making and picquet duties on what would turn out to be a very wet night with thunder and lightning and rain falling in torrents soaking everything, his big coat, blankets and also the waterproof sheet. The following day was no better when he came off picket duty at 6.30 a.m. described as being "very wet" and "after breakfast it came on to thunder and lightning also rained and hailed in torrents". The inclement weather did not mean a break from day-to-day duties – at 2.00 p.m. he was again on fatigues, making roads.

However, there were lighter moments to break up the monotonous routine of an army unit in the field and to take their minds off the danger that they were continually in. On the 1st September he records playing cricket against the King's Royal Rifle Brigade, and winning – he does not give the scores. The next day, after Sunday

morning church parade, the harsh reality of their situation returned. With the company being halved between outpost and picquet duty, he notes that “we expect an attack on the camp at 1.00 a.m. when the moon went down. The Boers tried to blow up a train but did not succeed, killing the fireman and wounding the engine driver”. They had to turn out at 1.30 a.m. to send out patrols to the detached posts the Boers having captured Captain Valentine along with others who cannot be identified from the entry in the diary.

The next page of the diary contains an interesting entry possibly relating to what the men might find themselves doing when the hostilities were over, “Returns to be sent out the Orderly Room by 2.00 p.m. today of N.C.O.s & men wishing to be employed as station masters, train foremens [sic], shunters, guards, or number takers, they will be well paid & may get permanent employment.” Was this an offer and opportunity for those serving with the colours to begin a new life in South Africa?

There is a line in the diary after this entry as if to mark a break of some sort, before it continues with what appears to be a new daily routine and restrictions on leaving the camp; “In future Orderly Room will be at 9.00 a.m., guard mounting 8.45 a.m., parade for fatigue at 9.30 a.m., parade for washing at 2.00 p.m. under the subaltern of the day. No N.C.O.s or men are allowed to go into the town except on Saturdays. At other times they will only be allowed to go there for special reasons and they must obtain permission to do so from the O.C. their Companies.” It is signed by order of Captain S. C. Long, the battalion commander. The town in question was probably Heidelberg in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

On Monday, 3rd September 1900, Lewis Turney records the following Regimental Order being issued; “Soldiers who were retained for an extra years service in consequence of the Queen’s Proclamation are entitled to their Discharge by the time that the extra year is complete and local arrangements will be made for passage to England for men in their 18th & 22nd years of service at such a time as will allow of their Discharge in England at the expiration of the extra year. This applies to men recalled to the Colours from Section D of the Reserve who are in their fifth year of Service from the date of attestation in that Section. The men should be sent in batches monthly or otherwise as may be convenient and ordinary packets should be

utilised in absence of public opportunity.” At the time that this was issued, Lewis Turney was two months short of completing twelve years with the Colours, he had attested in November 1888. Company Commanding Officers were instructed to send returns to the Orderly Room by 9.00 a.m. on the 29th of the month listing the men whose service would expire the month after next, i.e., the returns of those whose service would expire in November would have to be submitted in September.

The following day it was back to the mundane and day-to-day routine enhanced only by the receipt of a letter and paper from home. The mundane was replaced the following day by his unit going out at 3.30 a.m. in support of an attack on a Boer position, “but they found them to be in force and had to retire”, adding in the same sentence that he “wrote a letter home while out in support close to the Gold Mines”.

The Bicester Advertiser of the 14th September reported on the novel way the British had devised for removing Boer prisoners of war from the theatre of operations and preventing the inevitable disruption caused by any escapees, much as Winston Churchill had done following his escape from the Boer camp in Pretoria in December 1899 – by sending them to Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka. Specifically, to a prison camp “one hundred and forty miles within the picturesque hills of Ceylon, beyond the sanatorium of Newera Eliya”. In the charge of Colonel Vincent of the Scottish Rifles, it was designed to hold 4,000 prisoners, although the article stated that it was likely that it would have to hold 5,000 at a time. The first batch of 233 prisoners, it is reported, arrived three days late on the 8th August, and “consisted of the worst characters – Irish-Americans, Hollanders, Germans, and other European nationalities. Only the eighteen officers of their own number were Boers of respectable antecedents – barristers, mining engineers, and even doctors, and one clergyman.” In total some 26,000 Boer prisoners of war were sent overseas to St Helena, India and Bermuda, in addition to Sri Lanka.

Personnel matters of a different sort were occupying the minds of Lewis Turney’s superiors at the time. On Friday the 7th September Company Commanders were instructed that by 9.00 a.m. on the following Monday a list of the men of the draft of the 12th April who had: died, been invalided home, were sick, had been sick but returned to duty, and who were doing duty with the battalion, was to be compiled.

The following day, Saturday, 9th September, the company paraded at 6.45 a.m. the company paraded for washing, "but on account of it being such a cold wind the Commanding Officer gave the order there would not be any bathing". The effects of the cold were moderated somewhat by some internal heating in the shape of an issue of rum. This was augmented by the arrival of thirty-six barrels of beer the following day which appears to have been available at 4d a pint. The effects of the freezing weather and monotony of fatigues were also lessened by the receipt of a letter and newspaper from home. This was supplemented shortly after by the arrival of ½ pound of tobacco in two ¼ pound round tins and a packet of cigarettes from Salmon & Gluckstein Ltd., of Clerkenwell Road, London.

On the following Wednesday, 12th September, he got the opportunity to improve and demonstrate his marksmanship skills. This involved firing three rounds at a stationary target and another three at a disappearing target – Lewis Turney gives no details of the distances involved. He records "I got one hit on each; had to pay 1d a round for ammunition. I received 1/- for disappearing target and 9d for stationary target gaining 1/3 to the good." He also reports receiving a book, the title is not given, from Lord Edward Clinton. He had joined the Rifle Brigade in 1854 as an ensign, served in Crimea after the fall of Sebastopol and retired in 1880 as a Lieutenant-Colonel while stationed in India. At the time of the Boer War, he was Master of the Household to Queen Victoria. Lewis Turney reports that every N.C.O. and man in the Rifle Brigade received a copy. He records writing a letter, putting it with the book, and sending both to England with two one penny stamps – and he received an issue of rum after tea at about 6.00 p.m. He concludes the good news with the information that Lord Frederick Roberts and the Guards Brigade would be leaving South Africa for England on the 25th; news that perhaps foreshadowed and gave him hope for the eventual return of his own unit.

The thought that the War was coming to an end was echoed in the editorial of the *Bicester Herald* of the 28th September, beginning: "The sanguinary South African war – as such – is regarded as over – though it will be surprising if

guerrilla fighting does not afford trouble for some time to come long after Lord Roberts and the bulk of his conquering legions have left the field of conflict." This is followed by a concise summary outlining the course of the conflict and how the tide had been turned against the Boer forces.

That military operations were possibly coming to an end did not signify that there could be a relaxation in the readiness for action and Lewis mentions having to "...sleep in belts, boots & puttees ready to turn out at a moments notice throughout the night." And, on more day to day matters he "Went round the section for names who wanted kit. I put myself down for a new pair of braces." On a more sombre note he "...also asked each N.C.O. & man in section if he was willing to subscribe toward a monument to be erected at Pieters Hill for the 7 men who got killed in action."

Lewis also refers to the military successes that his side was having, after mentioning an issue of rum, he writes "...also heard the British had entered Barterton & released a lot of British officers and men the Boers held prisoners that Gen. French had captured 100 Boers & 40 odd engines & a lot of rolling stock also Gen. Buller had captured a lot of ammunition, wagons & guns." The General French that Lewis Turney mentions is Sir John French who would achieve greater fame commanding the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front during the first part of the Great War before he was replaced by Sir Douglas Haig in 1915. He goes on to mention that Paul Kruger had fled to Lorenzo Marques, now Maputo, in Mozambique, and that the British were landing troops there, and also that Louis Botha had been confined to his bed because of illness. On a more personal front, on Monday, 17th September he notes that he had received a parcel from home containing 4½ ounces of tobacco and three packets of Woodbine cigarettes. That afternoon he purchased six rounds of ammunition – three to fire at a disappearing target and three at a vanishing target, although he does not say what the difference was between the two. He scored one hit on the latter.

Two days later he made the following entry in

his journal: "On Wednesday 19th September, my birthday, 29 years of age. Parade for washing at 6.45 a.m. after breakfast parade for fatigues 8.30 a.m. Road making until 11.30 a.m. After parade bought a registered envelope 2½ & wrote a letter home also sent in the letter some Kruger money to the value of £1 16s 6d ... had the letter posted in the afternoon at the field post office by [illegible] it cost 5d to send home; also received an issue of lime juice and an issue of rum detailed for Quarter Guard tomorrow by the Coy. Orderly Sgt. Corporal Brouthers." So ended Lewis Turney's 29th birthday – you did not get excused from routine fatigue duty on your birthday, not in Queen Victoria's Army.

Three days later he records having a hair cut and "afterward went down to the river and had a good bath & done all washing up by borrowing soap". He mentions doing the same on the following Wednesday – perhaps an indication that the cold weather that he had mentioned earlier was warming.

Sadly, on the following Saturday, the 22nd, he relates an incident that tarnished his reputation. It appears that he was asleep in his tent and did not hear the turnout for the piquet parade at 5.00 a.m. The following Monday he was brought before Second Lieutenant Dick Cunyngham but seems to have escaped lightly on this occasion with a warning not to let something similar happen again. This was not the only infraction of military regulations he appears to have made. His entry for the 1st October he mentions being brought before his Captain for the crime of "just taking a sip of water in my hand" the previous day, adding that he "got away with it as usual". Later that day he had something stronger than a sip of water, at 5.00 p.m. he had a pint of beer costing 4d, also receiving a copy of the People from home.

Matters recorded in the journal now fall back to a regular routine of parades for fatigues, outpost duty etc., only interrupted by a visit to the cobblers to have his boots seen to and to the armourer to have a new backsight put on to his Lee Enfield rifle. On Tuesday, 2nd October he mentions receiving three letters, to which he responded the following day, and one paper from England.

On Saturday 6th October he and twelve men paraded at 7.00 a.m. reporting to the Brigade Major and marched to the marketplace at Heidelberg to await the arrival of a convoy which they were to escort back. After waiting for over an hour and with no sign of the convoy he sent a man back to report to the Brigade Major. He received instructions to march his party back to the camp arriving back at 10.00 a.m. – a fruitless morning, but while they were marching and waiting, they were not assigned to other fatigues.

On Wednesday, 10th October a report was received from scouts that a force of 300 Boers was south-east of the camp, marching on Heidelberg and that they had crossed the Vaal River in force. At 5.00 p.m. that day there was a memorial service in the camp in memory of Captains Stewart and Paget and Private Powell who were killed in action at Vlak Fountain.

[To be continued]

Bygone Bicester

All articles taken from the Bicester Advertiser for July

7th July 1882

Charge of Obtaining Money Under False Pretences

Catherine Neal was brought up on remand charged with obtaining 5s. from Mr Thomas Grimsley, builder, of Bicester, on June 27th.

Mr Grimsley's evidence of Wednesday was read over, who said on the faith of the letter he advanced the 5s. thinking one of Mr Clarke's servants had wrote it. The allusion of his being with Mr Clarke that morning had some weight with him.

George Reynolds, relieving officer, residing at Bicester, said he did not know the woman. He was talking to Mrs Amos in her kitchen on the preceding Tuesday, when she came into the shop and asked for something to stick a letter. Mrs Amos called witness and he saw the woman in the shop, at a little after 12 o'clock in the day. She held a letter in her hand. He was asked to stick the letter but having nothing to do so though, said he could seal it at his house across the road, where he went and the woman with him. He asked her if it would not be better to put it in an envelope. He did not then know the contents of the letter. She put the letter in an envelope and asked him to direct it, which he did to Mr Thomas Grimsley. She then left the house and he had not seen her since until now.

Mr G. Rochfort Clarke, sworn, said the letter produced was not in his handwriting. He did not know by whom it was written, and no one had authority to write in his name. He saw the woman on Tuesday the 27th, she had been to his house before, when he gave her money and a bible, and had not seen her from that time up to the Tuesday. On that day or the previous she called again and asked for money, telling him there were four tradespeople in Bicester who would furnish her with articles to hawk if she could get the money to obtain the license. She said she suffered from rheumatism, and he asked her if a hawker's business was suitable for her being out in all kinds of weather, and if it would not be better for her to go into the hayfield. He promised to give her a fork and she said she would. He had great doubts, but he

would not give her money.

He brought her into the garden and told her to sit down whilst he wrote a note to Grimsley. He then told a servant to go out to see if she could find anything out about the woman. The servant came back and told him the woman had shown her her knees which were very much swollen, and she was to be pitied.

He gave the prisoner the note which he wrote to Mr Grimsley to ask him to give her money to get a fork or rake, and if after enquiry he thought it a proper case he was to take out a hawker's license for her. The woman had no opportunity of writing on his lawn, and the letter produced was not in his handwriting or anyone in his establishment.

The prisoner said she asked Mr Clarke for the loan of the money and she would pay him back in a fortnight. Mr Clarke said the prisoner might have stated this. She told him she was a widow with two children.

John Thomas Stewart, landlord of the Fox Inn, at Bicester, said he recollected Tuesday, the 27th June, when he saw the prisoner in his house a little before 12 o'clock, when she borrowed a sheet of note paper and wrote a letter. He did not give her an envelope as his name was upon them.

The magistrates retired, and on returning into court asked the prisoner if she would have the case dealt with summarily or would prefer it going before a jury. The prisoner said she would have it settled at once, and pleaded guilty.

Mr Marsham said the magistrates had considered the case and it was necessary an example should be made of her. On the Saturday before she had imposed on him (Mr Marsham) and had told him several untruths. The sentence would be one month's hard labour. (The Chairman, Mr G. Rochfort Clarke did not adjudicate in this case).

Interesting Local Case

At the Oxfordshire Appeal Tribunal, on Tuesday last, the Oxford Co-operative and Industrial Society appealed against the decision of the Bicester Urban Tribunal, in refusing to exempt Edwin Hims, manager of the Bicester branch of the Company.

Mr L.V. Murphy appeared on behalf of the Society, and Mr Ramsay, one of the Society's officials, was also present.

Mr Murphy stated that the man for whom exemption was asked was 40 years of age and married. He was the only male employee left at the Bicester branch, of which he was the manager. Before the war the number of male employees was five. These had been substituted by females, and it was absolutely essential that at least one man should remain. In the first place it would take months to train a female to take the place of Mr Hims, even if one could be trained at all. In the second place consideration would have to be given to the class of work Mr Hims performed. He was not merely a grocer's manager. He had to do a lot of work previously done by a porter. This work included the unloading of motor vans from Oxford. There was only one man left who was able to drive these vans, and he occasionally assisted with the unloading, but he would shortly be joining the colours, his final period of exemption having almost expired. It was therefore obvious that a female would have to be employed as driver, and she could not be expected to assist with the strenuous task of unloading.

The Chairman asked what articles could not be unloaded by a female, Mr Hims replying that there were many. He took, as an instance, a bag of Demerara sugar which weighed 2 1/2 cwt. Other sugar came in 2 cwt. bags.

A member asked if the International Stores at Bicester was not managed by a lady. Mr Murphy

replied in the affirmative, but pointed out that there was a lot of difference between the International Stores and the Co-operative Society. The former had no dealings with bread, which the latter had, neither had they a bank, or any work to do with regard to shareholders' investments. Mr Murphy stated that the turnover at the Bicester branch of the Society, for the year ending July 1917, was nearly £7,000.

The Chairman asked what the number of men employed in the whole of the Co-operative Society's branches was, and also the number of branches.

Mr Ramsay replied that the number of men was 74, and the number of branches 18.

The Chairman observed that there were, on an average, four men to a branch. He asked if it would not be possible for one of these men to take the place of Mr Hims.

Mr Ramsay said that it must be borne in mind that some of these men were themselves managers. No branch of the Society was managed by a female. The number of men also included porters, and it was of course, impossible to make a porter into a grocery manager.

The tribunal, after a short consultation, decided to grant three months' conditional exemption, the Chairman remarking that special notice had been taken of Mr Hims' category (C1), his age, and the importance of the work he was engaged in.

25th July 1941

Speech Day at Bicester County School

The seventeenth annual speech day and prize distribution was held at Bicester County School on Wednesday, and the usual large gathering of parents and friends assembled in the School Hall for the occasion.

Each year previously, since the school was established in 1924, Mr J.L. Howson, who retired from the headmastership last term, has superintended the arrangements connected with this yearly function, and in his own quiet and unassuming way he assured the smooth working of the programme. One became used to observing his characteristic stance, and to hearing his slow and deliberate speech as he recited, with his usual varying intonation, the work accomplished by the School during the year.

These duties on Wednesday fell upon the new headmaster, Mr E.T. Clothier, equally well-known and respected, whose association with the school has extended almost as long as that of Mr Howson's, and he succeeded in preserving the traditional atmosphere and importance of the occasion. Although having completed only one term as headmaster, he gave a comprehensive report, which showed continued progress by the School, and the maintaining of the high standard of its work.

Mr G.B. Randolph, chairman of the Board of Governors, presided at this year's gathering, and on the platform with him were Mrs Ruck Keene and Councillor T. Hudson, (also members of the Governing body), Mrs Slater Harrison, Mr T.O. Willson (Director of Local Education) and Mrs Willson, Mr E.T. Clothier, Miss G.H. Dannatt (headmistress) and Mr O'Shanghnessy (headmaster of the L.C.C. School of Photo-Engraving, now evacuated to Bicester).

After the school had sung, "Where e'er you walk," the Chairman referred to the great change

which had taken place since they had met at a similar gathering last year – the departure of Mr J.L. Howson – and spoke in appreciative terms of all that the former headmaster had achieved for the school, from its inception 17 years ago. The fruits of his work were abundantly clear to all – the success of the school, its tradition and high standard of work – and he, the Chairman, was sure that all present, and everyone connected with Bicester County School, would wish both Mr and Mrs Howson a long and happy retirement. (Applause).

Mr Randolph took the opportunity to publicly congratulate Mr E.T. Clothier on succeeding to the position of headmaster, and remarked that Mr Clothier was no stranger to them, rather was he an old friend. "We have no doubt, whatever," added the chairman, "that he will carry on the very best traditions of the school and look after its welfare." (applause).

The Chairman, amid laughter, then referred to the "hardy annual" – the question of the new assembly hall in place of the hut – and admitted that each year for a long time this necessary project had been promised. Had the war not intervened the work would have commenced. "We have to beat Hitler first," said Mr Randolph, amid cheers, "but when that's accomplished you shall have an assembly hall worthy of the school."

Finally, the Chairman explained that, on the grounds of economy, certificates would be presented instead of the usual prizes, and he hoped the successful scholars would cherish and preserve them equally as well, representing as they did records of their successes at that school.

Mr Clothier then presented his headmaster's report as follows: "I have the honour to present the seventeenth annual report of Bicester County School.

Our registered numbers for the three terms of the school year are: Autumn 154, Spring 154, Summer 156. When the school reopened for the Autumn term last September our pupils numbered 144, but this number was increased to 154 by the arrival at intervals of children evacuated from more vulnerable areas. At the end of the term it became evident that the Second Form, which numbered 39, could no longer continue as a single class. It was therefore divided into two parallel forms, now known as Form 2a and 2b. As no classroom was available for the extra form so created, it became necessary during the Spring to use the lecture room at Claremont House as a temporary home for Form 1. At the beginning of this term, however, rooms on the top floor of the school building became vacant. Form 1 returned, and the whole school is now once again under the same roof.

The number 156 for the Summer Term constitutes a record for the school, which will, however, be short lived, for the entries already received for next term exceed in number these pupils who are leaving today.

I now pass on to the results of the School Certificate Examination, held in July last year. Seventeen pupils from Form 5a were entered for this examination, and all were successful. What is even more gratifying is the fact that the marks were uniformly good in all subjects, for this is an indication that the pupils had acquired an all-round ground work of knowledge. Indeed, no less than 14 of the 17 did so well in their respective subjects as to be entitled, should they so desire, to claim exemption from the matriculation examination of London and other British Universities.

The successful candidates were: R.D. Darvill, Coralie Dickens, Edwina Elias, G.R. Fathers, J.H. Fathers, Dinah Godwin, Doreen Hayward, K.J.A. Honour, J. Kiely, A.E. McMahon, Mary O'Shaughnessy, C.A. Perry, J.A. Powell, G.C. Pether, Irene Putt, W.G. Reeve, and Molly Young. The eighteenth member of the form, H. Tint, who was prevented by illness from taking the examination in July, was successful in the December examination.

Three former pupils – Eileen McCane, Grace Orchard and Joan Perry – have completed two years' training in preparation for the teaching profession, at Hereford Training College, and all three will begin their teaching careers after the summer holidays.

The number of old boys serving with H.M. Forces continues to increase, and we are glad and proud to record that one has received a military decoration. He is Flight Lieutenant W.E.V. Malins, who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross last August. Thanks to Malins' reticence on the subject, we are still ignorant of the precise details of the particular feat for which the award was made; but knowing him as we did at school, we are very sure that it was well and truly earned, and if the school had a share, however small, in the development of the qualities of courage, skill and endurance which characterise those who gain such distinctions, then we are serving a useful purpose in more than purely scholastics respects.

The curriculum of the school again underwent some modification this year, when during the darker winter months it became necessary to curtail afternoon school in order that pupils from a distance might reach their homes in daylight. Probably the most deplored result of this was the elimination of all dramatic activities, the culminating point of which has been the drama competition, held on the last day of the Autumn Term for the cup, kindly presented by Mrs Ruck Keene, but owing to the impossibility of arranging rehearsals, this competition has had to take its place with those many other joys of which we are temporarily deprived.

Some limitation of the time spent on the games field also took place, but in spite of this the efficiency of the winter games was not greatly impaired. The girls' hockey team had a very successful season, finding no difficulty in defeating various elevens of the Women's Services and more than holding their own against other school teams. The Rugby team was of moderate strength, and was unfortunate in having most of the fixtures cancelled by opponents, due to illness and lack of transport.

The normal school times were restored in the Spring and the seasonable games – tennis and cricket – were on the whole successful. The girls' tennis team would have recorded an undefeated season, but for their desire to number the staff amongst their victims. The cricket XI – as last year – has been much stronger in bowling than in batting, but has been successful in some low scoring matches. This has been a fairly good season for swimming and a number of the juniors have benefited by the instruction given and have learnt to swim.

During the last year or so some pupils have

taken the various examinations conducted by the Royal Life Saving Society. This year has been no exception and three girls, Rosemary Holden, Jean Coles and Betty Stockley, have qualified for the Bronze Medallion, while Pamela Harding, who has been responsible for their teaching, has received one of the highest awards given by the Society, that of first class instructor.

The school is making its own modest contribution towards the national effort in various ways. Early this term a derelict allotment of one chain was taken over and has been cultivated by the senior boys, who have voluntarily given up one games period in six for the purpose. It is hoped that a good crop of potatoes will reward their efforts.

In addition a knitting party has been formed, whose 68 members will spend part of their time during the summer holiday in producing "comforts" for the Royal Air Force. To finance this project, a play, to be given by the scholars, is in the rehearsal stage and should be ready for presentation early next term.

Finally, though by no means least, the school National Savings Group has recently made such progress that this term the amount of money saved has exceeded the combined total of the previous five terms.

Two changes have occurred on the staff during the year. Mrs J.L. Crabb, after one term's service, left us at Easter to join her husband in North Africa. The other change was the most momentous in the history of the school – the departure of Mr Howson, headmaster. When the news of Mr Howson's retirement became known a year ago, it caused a general feeling of incredulity and dismay. The school was so much of his own creation, and there was so much of his own personality in every feature of its existence, that it seemed incredible that it could go on without him. Not only was this the feeling of the scholars, both past and present, but it was shared by their parents, and to an even greater degree by the members of his staff. His kindness, consideration and personal integrity made it a pleasure to serve under him and at all times brought out the best qualities of loyalty and service in all his assistant teachers.

In this connection I might mention that when it was decided to ask his acceptance of a small parting gift from the staff, and we invited former members of the staff to join us in this expression of our good wishes, not one failed to respond, and everyone spoke of the pleasure it gave them

to do so, and the happiness they had enjoyed during their service in the school.

For myself, I can only say that during the long period of nearly 16 years in which I was privileged to serve under Mr Howson I never once appealed to him for guidance or assistance which was not immediately and readily given, and in this time I learnt to recognise in him a headmaster of more than common worth. The debt of gratitude which I had already owed him as his assistant was greatly increased on my appointment as his successor, for he spared neither time nor trouble during the busy preparations for his departure, to initiate me into the many details of administration and organisation necessary for a smooth transference of the reins of authority.

The last day of Mr Howson's headmastership was marked by a presentation from the scholars of the school, when an armchair was offered for his acceptance; and at a previous meeting the old scholars handed to him a cheque with which to buy some memento of their happy association with the school and himself. Thus Mr Howson took with him from Bicester County School the goodwill and affection of everyone who had been associated with him here, and these gifts I know, gave him greater pleasure and satisfaction than the tangible expressions of them.

The two vacancies were filled by the appointment of Miss S. Hall, BA, who now teaches English throughout the school, and of Miss H.K. Davies, BA, who is responsible for general form subjects in the junior school.

To all members of the staff I wish to express my gratitude for their loyalty and help that has at all times been most generously given; and to the Governors may I express my appreciation of their kindness and consideration during this, my first term as headmaster."

Three of Franz Schubert's songs – "Fisher Ways," "Whither," and "A Roaming" were sung by the school choir, following which the Chairman invited Mrs Ruck Keene to present the prizes. He remarked that she did not require any introduction, as she was an old friend, and well known and highly respected in Bicester and its neighbourhood, whose interests she had ever at heart. In Bicester County School also, Mrs Ruck Keene had always shown the keenest interest.

After expressing her thanks to the Chairman, Mrs Ruck Keene distributed the prize certificates as follows:

Form VI - Mathematics and history, J. Kiely.

Form Va - 1. A.C. Mole, 2. Mary McCann,
3. A.E. Dean.

Form Vb - 1. Marjorie Elias, 2. Betty Stockley,
3. I.G. Philpot.

Form IV - 1. K. Cheale, 2. Connie Denton,
3. W.H. Butt.

Form III - 1. Beryl Stevens, 2. Iris Bulgin,
3. Kathleen Sims.

Form IIa - 1. Mary Beasley, 2. Joanne Andrews,
3. Betty Durrant.

Form IIb - 1. P.H. Curtis, 2. W.J. Winning,
3. J. Bowerman.

Form I - 1. Jean Nash, 2. F.R.H. Parker,
3. C.J. Nash.

Woodwork, A.E. Mole (seniors), D.I. Jenkins (juniors); needlework, Jean Coles; cookery, Ann Tompkins; general knowledge, G.C. Pether (seniors), Jayne McIntyre (juniors); art, J.C. Buckingham; reading, M. Walters (seniors), Beryl Stevens (juniors); gardening, M.L. Beaumont and Cynthia Balderson; cricket, R.J. White (bowling), R.W.J. Price (batting); tennis, Jean Coles; swimming, Pamela Harding.

House championship - King's End (work); Priory End (games).

The prize distribution concluded, Mrs Ruck Keene addressed a few words to the assembly, first expressing the great pleasure afforded her in being invited to perform the present task of presenting the prizes. She referred to the former headmaster appreciatively, and equally welcomed his successor. Speaking to the seniors, who had passed the school certificate examination, she urged them not to gain the impression that they had finished their education, a mistake, she said, made by so many. There was much to study in after life, especially human nature, and hard work was essential if further success was to be achieved. Congratulating the seventeen who had won the school certificate, Mrs Ruck Keene said, "Hitler set out to undermine the morale of our nation, without success; he has certainly not undermined the morale of these scholars, which is proved by the success they have achieved." (Applause).

The speaker advised her younger hearers to adopt the slogan "it all depends on you," for, she said, the destiny and shipping of the future did depend on them. They must learn all they could at school, by absorbing all which their teachers

offered them in learning, to think for themselves, and be observant of all the angles of human nature, for upon the younger generation would the task fall of creating a new world and a better and newer England.

They would never be able to assume positions of responsibility in life if they did not work and prepare at school. "Do not slack," she urged, "but put your whole energy into your efforts while you are at school. Study the elements of criticism, particularly how to use it, and do not be downcast if you are criticised. Both here and in after life you will have to stand up to it, so learn to accept it and act by it, as your conscience guides you. Cultivate and express freely your own ideas concerning the future - reconstruction and other things."

In conclusion, Mrs Ruck Keene congratulated the school and its staff on the completion of another successful year's work.

Four songs of the Hebrides - "The Cockle Gatherer," "The Peat Fire Flame," "An Eriskay Love Lilt," and "The Road to the Isles" - were then admirably sung by the scholars.

In proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs Ruck Keene, Councillor T. Hudson endorsed the Chairman's earlier remarks concerning her own and her family's associations with Bicester, and her interest in the school. - The Chairman seconded the vote of thanks, which were warmly accorded.

In reply, Mrs Ruck Keene mentioned that she had received a letter from Mr Howson, in which he had expressed his regret at not being able to be present at that gathering, but assuring her that he was with them in thought and spirit.

Thanks were also accorded to the Chairman, and the singing of the well-known "Jerusalem" and the National Anthem concluded another impressive occasion. Mr J.N. Davies, at the piano, accompanied the singing throughout.

After tea there was country dancing on the lawn, and afterwards visitors inspected displays of work in the domestic science and woodwork rooms.

14th July 1989

Time To End Haggling Over Sports Centre

Early morning queues at Bicester and Ploughley sports centre of people anxious to book up for courses are an example of its popularity and also a symptom of its problems. The ever growing town means that the centre needs to expand, though that in itself may not cause the queues to vanish.

However, you do not have to be a serious swimmer to appreciate that a dip in the pool – one of the centres most popular amenities – can be fraught with difficulties if the shallow end is full of mums and dads teaching their toddlers to swim – a very laudable ambition no one wants to see stop. Mums and dads, though, would doubtless prefer to teach their children in a specially designed learner pool and improvements to the main pool with a flume would dispel the view of many swimmers that the pool is rather boring.

A fitness room too, would be a welcome addition. All these additions had been expected to be built in the near future, but the plans have become bogged down in political infighting between Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council over the future ownership of the centre.

Cherwell argues that before investing a lot of money it should have ownership. The county council disagrees, though admits it has no money to put in.

To find the answer to the ownership issue it is necessary to look into the background of Bicester and Ploughley Sports Centre. It's very name with "Ploughley" gives a clue, though many newcomers might ask: who or what is Ploughley?

In 1967 the sports centre was opened at a cost of £185,253. It was a pioneering centre but then only provided a pool and main sports hall. It was constructed on the campus of Bicester Community College (Bicester School) with funds from the county council, Bicester Urban District



Fun in the pool - 1985



Council and Ploughley Rural District Council – the local authority covering the local villages.

The centre was built by what is called joint funding and after 1974 when Bicester UDC and Ploughley RDC were merged along with Banbury Borough and Banbury Rural District councils into Cherwell, the dual ownership remained. Hence the present day tug-of-war.

What the dual ownership means is that the county council still owns the freehold site – the land – and contributes money towards the use of the centre by schools and the youth service, plus some more towards maintenance. Cherwell handles the rest.

The county council – or more precisely an alliance of Labour and Democrat county councillors – is so far against the sale of the centre to Cherwell. Conservative county councillors generally support the sale. On the other side, Cherwell – a Conservative controlled council – wants to buy before investing a lot more money.

Conservative county councillors, like Mr Charles Shouler (Bicester South) support the sale to Cherwell, provided safeguards are written into the deal ensuring the schools and youth service can continue to use the centre on the same terms as at present. He might also say that as the county council is strapped for cash with a temporary halt on most capital expenditure, it could do with extra money from Cherwell if a sale went through. Think what the county council could do with, for argument's sake, £2 million.

And everyone realises that it would be in the interests of Cherwell if it bought the centre that the school and youth service should continue. After all, young people are the future long-term users, or clients, of any sports centre.

Fears that Cherwell ownership would mean higher fees are somewhat off the point, as it would be foolish for any operator to price the centre out of the reach of its users. It is wise to remember that even now the centre runs moneysaving schemes for regular users including families.

Supporters of the status quo – the schools in the main – fear that under their new money or budget control duties following the Education Reform Act, 1988, they will have to spend some of their money to pay for their pupils' use of the centre.

So what are the figures now and what of the

fears of headteachers like Mr Keith McClellan, of Cooper Comprehensive, who raised these points in the Bicester Advertiser two weeks ago?

First the money. In the last financial year, 1987-88, it cost £393,000 to run the centre, which is open from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm (bar closes at 11 pm) almost 365 days a year. The centre closes a few days around Christmas.

Oxfordshire County Council contributes £98,000. Cherwell takes care of the rest, which includes the fees paid by users/clients and the operating deficit of around £50,000.

Put another way, the county council contributes 20 per cent of the annual cost of 19 per cent of the centre's time. Cherwell's contribution is 80 per cent of the cost for 81 per cent of the centre's time. Whatever the figures, the present dual ownership system works well.

Centre manager Mr Ken Walton said: "With the co-operation of the heads of the comprehensive and primary schools using the centre we ensure the centre is fully used. There are other centres in Oxfordshire that stand empty if schools are not utilising the time allocated to them.

"We have the most advanced dual use system and we do not have the centre unused as we all give and take – the schools, the general public and the user groups."

Mr Walton agrees that the growth of the town is outstripping the amenities at the centre and feels a learner pool at least is vital.

The fears of school heads and their governors would appear to be groundless, according to Mr John Smallridge, a senior administration officer in the county chief executive's department. Mr Smallridge said that the county council has asked the Department of Education for permission for the county council to continue to make a block payment towards the use of the centre by the schools and youth service. He said: "If it was left to the schools to make a payment from their budget, there is no guarantee that they would do so and the county council would still be left with making the contribution."

Mr Smallridge said that if the centre was sold to Cherwell, the money the county council gained would go into its general capital funds and the money would not specifically be spent in Bicester. He also echoed a letter by Mr Wilf Wigney, published in the Bicester Advertiser, that the existing agreement over the ownership of the centre did not preclude Cherwell from investing money of its own. He pointed out:

"There is 40 years to run on the agreement so Cherwell would have security for its expenditure."

As the Bicester Advertiser has reported, Cherwell spent in the last three years £280,000 on extensions, including a new bar and extra changing rooms, £40,000 on extending the car park and £74,000 on the two floodlit all-weather sports pitches.

Mr Barry Wood, chairman of Cherwell's finance sub-committee and a member of the sports centre management committee, accepts that Cherwell could continue to make much-needed improvements under the status quo. He added: "But the council felt that in order to safeguard its investment properly the council ought to enjoy ownership of something they were investing in. If the county council owns half of the centre, it is reasonable to expect the county council to pay towards the cost of improvements. The county council's asset is increasing in value as well as our own."

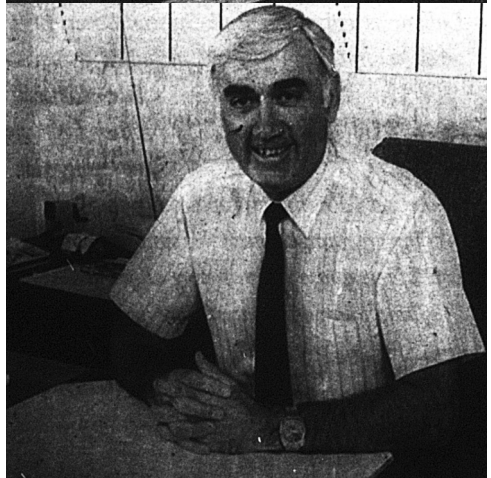
Mr Wood pointed out that the county council thought that it had other priorities than to spend money on recreation. Cherwell on the other hand felt it should improve the centre and had the money to spend.

Mr Wood added: "In the end analysis if the sale falls through, Cherwell would have to seriously consider for the sake of the people of Bicester that it should invest more money into the centre anyway."

He did not think that the arrival next April of the community charge or poll tax would interfere with Cherwell buying the centre if a deal was not struck in the current financial year. He agreed that Cherwell was likely to spend huge amounts of money on the Spiceball Sports Centre at Banbury in the near future. Cherwell owns Spiceball outright.

So where are we now? Cherwell's recreation committee is due to receive a report on the sale issue next week. A figure Cherwell may be prepared to offer for the purchase may be mentioned. The following week Oxfordshire County Council is due to consider a recommendation from its education committee not to sell.

Clearly Bicester people in the town and villages demand improvements to the centre. It would be a shame if these improvements were shelved for some years through political in-fighting.



Top: The main hall being put to good use.

Middle: The cafe and social area.

Bottom: Ken Walton at work in his office.

Hostels for Agricultural Workers

Taken from the Bicester Advertiser, 22nd August 1941

Work has begun on most of the 289 hostels which the Ministry of Works is to erect for the Ministry of Agriculture on sites throughout the country to house 12,000 agricultural workers. It is hoped that all of them will be ready for occupation by the end of September. Generally speaking each hostel will accommodate 30 or 50 workers.

One is now nearing completion on a site adjoining the premises of Mr S. Hayes, at Highfield, Bicester.

The design of the hostels is standard, to enable them to be erected quickly and to conserve materials and labour. These standard plans (one for 30, one for 50 workers) have been issued to the architects in charge of erection. In most cases the hostels will be pre-fabricated and delivered to sites in units ready for immediate assembly on concrete foundations previously laid down by local contractors. Various materials have been used in the construction of the pre-fabricated units, to avoid making any undue call on any particular structural material and to allow all sections of the industry to contribute to rapid progress. Further, the plans are sufficiently flexible to allow the architect to use the materials most easily obtainable in the neighbourhood, thus easing the strain on transport. In some instances bricks will be used.

Each hostel is composed of three blocks:

- 1) The dormitory, heated by slow combustion stoves, with a small room at the end to house a member of the hostel staff, and another small room for boxes and storage.
- 2) An ablution block, containing, in addition to the sanitary accommodation, baths, shower baths, washing basins, a linen room and drying room, with a small boiler house to provide hot water for the baths and basins. Immediately outside there is a shallow foot bath for washing rubber boots, alongside which is a covered cycle rack.
- 3) The welfare block, consisting of an ample size room for dining and recreation, heated by slow combustion stoves. Beyond this is a kitchen, and, beyond that again, a small bungalow for the manager of the hostel. At the end of this is a small room reserved as a sick bay for workers.

All essential furniture will be supplied. This includes rugs for dormitory and recreation rooms, kit boxes, chairs, tables, cupboards, sideboards, bookcases, mirrors, bedding, kitchen equipment, cutlery, crockery, cleaning materials, etc.



Roll of Honour

The following are the local men, and those buried locally, who died in the Second World War, 80 years ago.

Assistant Cook William Arthur Cato, of Kirtlington.

Died: 9th July 1942 Aged: 20 Served in: Royal Navy - HM Trawler Manor

Sergeant John George Fruchtl, of Canada. (Buried in Hethe)

Died: 19th July 1942 Aged: 26 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Sergeant Meredith Edward Tuttle, of Co. Offaly, Ireland. (Buried in Hethe)

Died: 24th July 1942 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Air Force

Leading Aircraftman Ronald Leonard Smith. (Buried in Middleton Stoney)

Died: 7th August 1942 Served in: Royal Air Force

Sergeant Frederick Henry Downland, of Manitoba, Canada. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 7th September 1942 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Sergeant Ronald Adey Jackson, of Vancouver, Canada. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 7th September 1942 Aged: 21 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Sergeant George Barclay Robb, of Saskatchewan, Canada. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 7th September 1942 Aged: 28 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Sergeant Albert John Temple, of Winnipeg, Canada. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 7th September 1942 Aged: 27 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Sergeant Pat Neff Templeton, of Wellington, Texas, U.S.A. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 7th September 1942 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force

Squadron Leader Theodore James West, of Chelsea. (Buried in Fritwell)

Died: 19th September 1942 Aged: 49 Served in: Royal Air Force

Galley Boy Ernest Stanley White, of Bicester.

Died: 25th September 1942 Aged: 16 Served in: Merch. Navy - SS New York

Sergeant Archibald Anderson, of Elderslie, Renfrewshire. (Buried in Bicester)

Died: 28th September 1942 Aged: 21 Served in: Royal Air Force

Leading Aircraftman Henry William James Johnson, of Kirtlington.

Died: 29th September 1942 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Air Force



Wesleyan Ruckus in Launton

By Karen Musilova

In July 1844, the dying wishes of a local woman called Rebecca Savins caused a bit of a ruckus in the village of Launton, near Bicester.

Rebecca was baptised at St Mary's Church, Launton, on 19th November 1817 - the daughter of labourer John Savins and his wife Anne Savins, née 'Willowbee' (Willoughby).

Although baptised as a protestant, Rebecca had been a member of the local Wesleyan congregation for around 13 years prior to her death; however, she had expressed to friends and family that she wished to be buried in St Mary's cemetery, as that was where her relatives had been interred.

When the local Reverend Allies heard of this, he was incensed with rage. He not only refused to allow Rebecca to be buried at St Mary's, but he also refused to have anything to do with her burial whatsoever, due to her being a Dissenter.

Despite Rebecca's loved ones proving to Rev. Allies that she had been baptised at St Mary's (therefore giving her the right to be buried there, regardless of her religious affiliations since), he remained adamant that "no Dissenter should be allowed to mingle with his church-people".

After much pleading from Rebecca's family, Rev. Allies eventually relented, but stipulated that she ought to be buried at the very edge of the churchyard, "which was only fitting for her sort"! He also made it plain that he would much prefer it if her body were to be carried to St Edburg's Church in nearby Bicester, where the Reverend there might be "more sympathetic to the Dissenter's cause".

Undeterred, Rebecca's loved ones went to see the parish clerk, and paid the fees for a grave to be dug in the section of St Mary's churchyard closest to her relatives - directly defying Rev. Allies, who apparently "endeavoured to prevent the grave being dug, but could not, nearly all appearing against him".

St Mary's Church, Launton - 1904



Rev. Allies sent for two constables, hoping that they'd put a stop to this "madness", but unfortunately for him, they turned on him rather than Rebecca's kin. Apparently, Rev. Allies had "become quite maniacal" in his rage, so the policemen ordered him to comply, lest he be arrested.

On the day of Rebecca's funeral, Rev. Allies was forced to officiate, though he did only the bare minimum required. I daresay that his blood pressure rose considerably when he heard the mourners singing hymns from a Wesleyan book whilst her coffin was lowered into the ground.

The vast majority of the mourners "expressed their disgust at Rev. Allies' unfeeling and intolerant conduct", but ultimately, Rebecca and those who cared about her won. I like to think that, if there is some sort of afterlife, Rebecca Savins was smiling and chuckling down at the sight of the clearly incandescent Reverend that afternoon!



Bygone Bicester

All articles taken from the Bicester Advertiser for August

11th August 1882

Working Men's Fete and Gala

The 17th annual holiday, arranged by the working men of Bicester, was held on Monday last, and whether from the counter attractions that Bank holiday affords, or from the sameness of the fete year after year, this occasion showed a slight falling off, both in point of numbers and the way in which the day set apart was carried out.

Unless the committee offer further attractions in the shape of sports and better accommodation, the Bicester Working Men's Fete will have a hard matter to drag out its teens.

The witnessing of a cricket match is, to a great many, a source of enjoyment, whilst to others it affords no amusement whatever, more especially when played by two teams of the greater part raw recruits. Those who have the slightest knowledge of the game will not, when they have finished their innings, throw the bat down in the middle of the play; but to see a man carrying the bat to the tent, or at least to the next player, really looks more like business. The players no doubt have a merry time of it, but for those who "wish to have a treat," the fete is certainly minus something to occupy the attention of visitors before 4 o'clock.

For obvious reasons the ground did not present a very animated appearance as is usual on fete days, and on account of the opposition offered the pastimes for the younger fry had to be dispensed with.

The cricket match was commenced in the morning, and

play was continued up to about 2 o'clock, when the bell rang for lunch, which to our idea was one of the best features of the outing. Mr Beasley had made every preparation in the commissariat department, and it is needless to relate that after two or three hours in the cricket field, the appetites of those engaged were sharpened to a keen edge, and the comestibles provided could not have been improved upon.

After lunch the game was resumed and before the time stated for drawing the wickets the sides had both batted twice, the result being that the committee won the match by the close number of eight runs only. The following is the full score:

St Edburg's Hall Workmen

H Clifton, B Collins 1	B Franklin 3
T Hadland, run out 1	not out 2
B Rawlings, B Baughan 7	C J Munday, B Franklin 0
J Cobbett, C Wood, B Franklin 4	B W Munday 0
J Fisher, B Collins 8	St J Munday 0
D Mason, l-b-w, B Woods 3	run out 2
R Stanley, B Franklin 1	A Walker, B Eldridge 2
B Carter, not out 8	B Franklin 4
T Lines, B Franklin 0	stumped 0
T Clifton, C East, B Baughan 1	B W Munday 0
T Stockley, run out 0	C J Woods, B W Munday 2
Extras 5	Extras 5
Total 39	Total 20

Working Men's Committee

E Woods, B T Clifton 5	B H Clifton 5
W Neale, B T Clifton 0	B T Clifton 1
J Franklin, run out 13	B Walker 17
A Collins, B T Clifton 0	B T Clifton 0
C Eldridge, B T Clifton 0	B T Clifton 3
E Baughan, B T Clifton 4	C Lines, B T Clifton 7
J Woods, B T Clifton 1	not out 1
G Bowler, run out 1	W Munday, B T Clifton 0
T East, not out 1	B T Clifton 0
J Munday, C Stockley, B H Clifton 1	C Stockley, B T Clifton 1
J Grantham, C Hadland 1	B T Clifton 0
Extras 3	Extras 2
Total 30	Total 37

Whilst the match was proceeding, the band of the 2nd O.R.V.C. marched onto the ground, and during the afternoon played a selection of music.

The sports were carried out under the superintendence of the committee at the other side of the field, and without presuming to be at all dictatorial, we should like to suggest that these might be arranged in a more business-like way; as it is at present, the entries are made at the post, the competitors being boys and girls, and after the race there is frequently a disagreement as to the actual winner. The course is very badly kept, and those who have the management of the sports have at times a great difficulty in getting them off on account of the obstruction placed in their way, and which might be avoided.

The sports certainly caused some amusement, but the greater part of the time was spent in arranging the preliminaries. The prizes, although not valuable, were eked out to the best advantage, and under the circumstances, no doubt, well repaid those who were lucky enough to win them. The races were:

Boys' Race, 100 yards handicap. Seven started. 1st, James Collett.

Ditto for older boys, 150 yards. Five entries. 1st, Joseph Egerton.

Sack Race, 80 yards. Six entered. 1st, T. Clifton; 2nd, Albert Harris.

Egg and Spoon Race, 100 yards and home. This was run in anything but a satisfactory manner, so that the prizes could not be awarded. It was decided to run it off in a 150 yards handicap race, for which five entered, one giving up halfway. 1st, John Grace; 2nd, George Ayris.

Egg and Spoon Race for boys, 100 yards. Five started and as in the former race could not be decided. They were started again and Charles Bowers was awarded 1st.

Tug-of-War, between two teams of six men, best two tries out of three. The sides were as follows: Winman, Ward, Egerton, East, Wilson, and Bowers; and Baldwin, Blencowe, Pritchett, Tibbetts, Castle, and Coles. The side of the latter pulled their opponents over the mark first after some hard work, and after ends had been changed, they again proved the strongest.

Girls' Race, 100 yards handicap. A considerable time elapsed before enough could be got to make a race, and it was several times abandoned. Eventually five started. 1st, Rose Palmer.

Girls' Race, 100 yards. Five entries. 1st,

Elizabeth Ward.

Flat Race, 100 yards. 1st, James Grace.

Boys' Handicap Race, 100 yards. Ten started. 1st, W. Grace.

Eating Treacle Loaves. 1st, William Botley; 2nd, Joseph Leach.

Stone Race, 50 stones a yard apart. Five entered for this, which attracted more attention than any of the sports. The boys all worked hard and each deserved a prize. 1st, John Grace; 2nd, George Ayris.

Climbing the Greasy Pole for Leg of Mutton. This much coveted prize was not obtained by climbing, for hardly anyone attempted it. When it was found no one would accept it, the committee decided to run it off in a 100 yards hurdle race (handicap) eight flights of hurdles. There were eight entries. As the first two hurdles were taken by the foremost man they were lowered and the men behind jumped at nothing. The hurdles afterwards went to the ground in all directions, whilst the competitors were jumbling about in the most fantastical manner. 1st, Richard Coppock.

After the sports, the band played for dancing in an enclosure, and many took advantage of the opportunity of stepping to the adjusted measure of the lively polka and schottische regulated by the Bicester Band. No set dances were given out, the reason being, we suppose, only a few would avail themselves of them. The company had now become more numerous, and those who did not care to join in the giddy dance were accommodated with seats near the band so that they could observe all that was going on, and enjoy themselves in a more sedate way.

As the shades of evening began to fall, sundry "kissing rings" were formed, and it is wonderful how many (especially ladies) took part in these. As soon as one ring had finished its course of life others were formed, only larger and more numerous attended, and this was kept up until the field was cleared.

During the evening a balloon was sent up, which did not attain a very great altitude and finally landed again very near the starting point, and was brought back captured by some boys. Some fireworks also were let off, and what there were of them were very good indeed, the rockets being seen a long distance from Bicester.

The weather was such as ought to be for fete days, and we trust the finances have turned out the right side for the working men.

10th August 1917

Bicester Summer Fair

The annual summer fare was held on Saturday, when the day, so far as the weather is concerned, was one of the worst on record. From a business point of view, however, the fair grows in importance and favour, and whereas the weather established a record in one respect the number of sheep penned exceeded that of the previous year.

Messrs Paxton and Holiday were favoured with a consignment of upwards of 3,000, by far the largest number ever seen at this fair. There was a large number of buyers from Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Northamptonshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, and very satisfactory prices were realised, although the uncertainty as to prices which the Food Controller will fix upon mutton had its influence on the bidding. The highest price was obtained by Mr William Harper, of Croughton, for a very fine pen of ewes, which realised 104s., Mr Albert Tanner, of Heyford Leys, secured 103s., whilst a number of pens fetched 90s. and over.

The following were the average prices obtained:

Mrs Malins, Islip, ewes 79s., lambs 60s.

George Parker, Marsh Gibbon, theaves 80s., lambs 53s.

J.E. Collett, Arngrove, ewes 70s. 6d., lambs 38s.

W. Adams, ewes 82s., theaves 72s., lambs 53s.

William Deeley, Launton, ewes 75s., lambs 42s.

E.E. Hickman, Blackthorn, ewes 75s., lambs 54s.

Mrs Buckle, Chesterton, ewes 95s.

R. Fenemore, Wretchwick, lambs 35s.

J. Burnell, Muswell Hill, ewes 73s.

Aubrey Deeley, Merton, ewes 80s.

T. May, Baynards Green, ewes 80s.

W.H. Tanner, Wendlebury, lambs 42s.

J.E. Tompkins, Brill, lambs 52s.

T. Barge, Hillesden, lambs 49s.

C. Parker, Charndon, lambs 31s. 6d.

T.T. Brown, Woodeaton, ewes 78s., lambs 53s.

R.L. Taylor, Steeple Aston, ewes 57s.

Joseph Kinch, Steeple Aston, ewes 58s. 6d.

C.W. Jones, Blackthorn, lambs 56s.

J.H. Parker, Merton, ewes 83s. 6d.

F. Ginger, Launton, ewes 74s., lambs 64s.

J. Verey, Bourton, theaves 65s.

W.H.P. Hadland, Wretchwick, ewes 62s., lambs 35s. 6d.

John Allen, Sandford, lambs 37s.

W.A. Cattell, Caversfield, ewes 83s.

C. Trever, Astwick, ewes 61s. 6d.

G. Rowles, Weston, lambs 69s.

George Ancil, Launton, ewes 60s. 6d.

Major John Allen, Cottisford, ewes 83s.

A. Tanner, Heyford Leys, ewes 93s. 6d.
M.H. Warland, Heyford, ewes 74s. 6d.
H. Bartlett, Hampton Gay, theaves 90s.
A.H. Bartlett, Kirtlington, ewes 97s., lambs 66s. 3d.
A.H. Bartlett, Bletchington, lambs 56s.
J.E. Haynes, Oddington, ewes 62s. 6d., lambs 55s.
Mrs Smith, King's End, lambs 69s. 6d.
Earl of Jersey, ewes 84s.
J. Read, Boarstall, ewes 90s.
J. Adams, Waddesdon, ewes 76s.
H. King, Twyford, ewes 77s.
A.E. Prentice, Bicester, ewes 79s.
A. Coates, Hillesdon, ewes 70s., lambs 42s. 9d.
H. Cooper, Fencott, lambs 57s. 6d.
James Clarke, Roundhill, ewes 80s.
A.P. McLaren, Aynho, ewes 90s.
Mrs Phillips, Caversfield, ewes 78s.
T.W. Finch, Bucknell, ewes 74s., lambs 69s.
W. Harper, Croughton, ewes 92s.
C. Harper, King's Sutton, theaves 60s.
James Waller, Rousham, ewes 69s. 6d.
J. Preston, Fritwell, ewes 63s.
C. Parker, Rousham, theaves 85s.
John Collett, Oddington, lambs 52s.
John Tompkins, Islip, lambs 58s. 6d.
William Treadwell, Stratton Audley, ewes 88s. 6d.
F.H. Phipps, Stratton Audley, ewes 53s. 6d.
Joseph Jones, Blackthorn, ewes 89s. 6d.

J. Colgrove, Duns Tew (Scotch), ewes 23s.
F. Gough, Duns Tew, theaves 85s.
R.J. Tompkins, Brill, lambs 46s. 6d.
Mrs Cooper, Westcote, ewes 57s.
John Brown, Marsh Gibbon, ewes 75s., lambs 36s. 6d.
W.J. Jones, Marsh Gibbon, lambs 61s.
John Dickens, Brill, ewes 78s. 6d.
C. Crawford, Ambrosden, theaves 51s.
C. Parker, Charndon, lambs 52s.

Messrs Paxton and Holiday also offered some Oxford Down ram lambs, Suffolk ram lambs, and Border Leicester rams and ram lambs, which met a steady sale. There was only a short supply of cattle in the fair, the best price being £45 for a very nice milking cow sent by Mr Joseph Jones. Weaning calves made up to 46s. In consequence of the restrictions put on horses the number offered for sale was very much smaller than usual.

Evacuees' Boxing at Bicester

Postponed from the previous week, a successful programme of open-air boxing took place in the Bicester County School quadrangle (by kind permission of the Governors) on Thursday in last week. The chief contestants were the London boys at present evacuated here, but the proceedings were enlivened by exhibition bouts by members of the RAF and others. Mr E. Hart (headmaster) had charge of the arrangements, the ring, etc., being erected by the RAF, who also provided the seconds and furnished most of the officials.

Flight Officer Evendren was referee; Squadron-Leader Guggenheim and Lieutenant McGrath judges; Lieutenant A.G. Brown timekeeper; and Pilot Officer R.J.N. Lloyd Jones and Mr E. Hart, M.C.'s. Members of the school staff, Messrs Samuel, Young, Lord, Jarman, Booth, Davey and Lanaway, acted as stewards. Mrs L.A. Coker and Mrs Grant Morris were hostesses.

Lord and Lady Bicester attended, and a party of wounded from the Tusmore hostel were given ringside seats. The youngsters who performed in the ring were chiefly those who had boxed on similar occasions in Bicester before, and while there was little science in their display of the noble art, enthusiasm was not lacking, and all appeared well matched.

From the spectators' point of view the most exciting bout among the boys was that in which L. Chamberlayne and Jarvis took part. These extremely diminutive youngsters, one of whom was lifted into the ring with one hand by one of the seconds, went at it hammer and tongs in a flurry of gloves, to the great amusement of the onlookers.

Exhibition bouts by RAF boxers proved an added attraction, and each pair received an encouraging ovation. These bouts were designed to show the boys the finer points of the art, in using head and feet. Sergeant Percy James, well known Osberton Works and Oxford

City footballer, and Aircraftman Saunders met in a light-weight exhibition, Leading Aircraftman Cadle and Aircraftman Sheppard also boxing at this weight; Aircraftman Palmer and Private Dale (Royal Pioneer Corps) met as bantam weights; and Sergeant McDonald had three rounds with Don Pankhurst, the Bicester lad, at the welterweight.

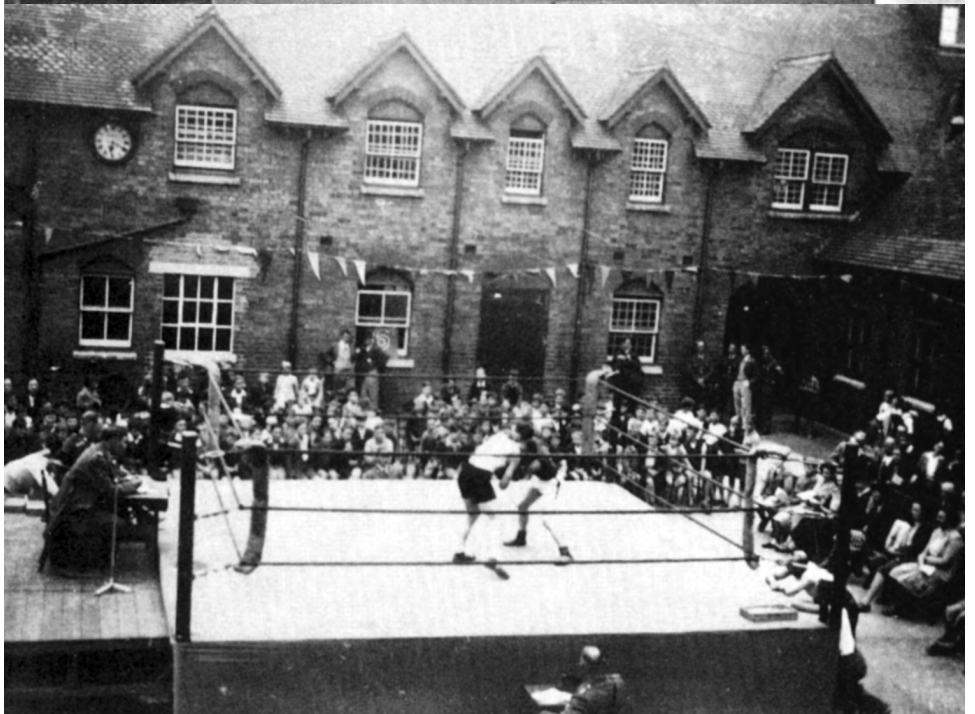
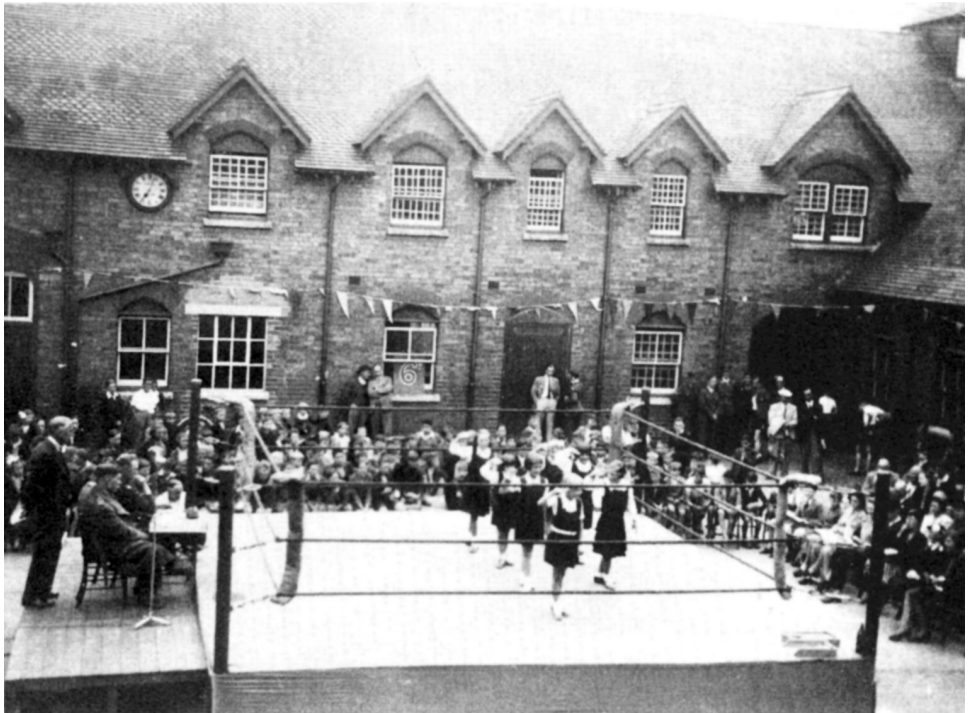
In the boys' boxing the results were: Istead beat Foster; Houghton beat Vanner; Gale beat Patten; Mountain beat Hunt; Jarvis beat Hunt; Crouch beat Scarfe; Hutchinson beat Cohen; Johnson beat Crane; Houghton beat Price; Wood beat Istead; Merritt beat Burton; and Chamberlayne beat Jarvis.

Selections by the RAF dance band and national dancing by the girls of Bignell Park School, in the charge of Miss G.M. Merrigale, added greatly to the enjoyment of the proceedings.

Lord Bicester, who was introduced by Mr Hart, was well received. His lordship expressed appreciation of the performance by the boys, noting with satisfaction that the art of boxing was included in the school's curriculum. He gave advice to the youngsters to remember all that Mr Hart and his staff taught them all at school, reminding them that they would enjoy the fruits of that labour in after life.

Councillor J. Leach proposed a vote of thanks to Lord Bicester for his attendance that evening, and said he was sure they had all enjoyed the proceedings. Councillor Leach paid tribute to the party of wounded in the audience, whom, he said, they all welcomed, and tendered thanks to Mr Hart, his helpers and boys for the evening's entertainment.

Mr Hart, in reply, offered a comprehensive vote of thanks to all who had assisted in staging the programme, notably the RAF and Messrs Trinder Bros. for their amplifier apparatus.



A Pizza by Any Other Name

Smoked salmon and caviar may make this a Rolls-Royce among pizzas but the top people's car-makers think it's in pretty poor taste.

Prize-winning pub hosts, Pete and Jenny Jones, have been ordered to stop calling their best pizza at The Bell pub, Bicester, after the luxury limousine. The ban, from an international trade mark agency acting for Rolls-Royce, has stunned them. After all, they have been using the name for three years.

"I was shocked that our pub calling a pizza after Rolls-Royce was causing so much consternation," said Mr Jones.

"Try as I might, I just could not understand how a circular pizza topped with cheese and other goodies could be considered imitation of a luxurious motor car or supersonic jet engine."

The Bell is well known for its pizzas; two years ago it won the Pizza Pub of the Year contest run by the Pub Caterer magazine.

Out of 17 different pizzas on the menu, the Rolls-Royce, described as "sheer indulgence", is the top of the range. Mrs Jones said: "It is nothing but a complement to the very high quality of their products. I cannot see that us naming a pizza Rolls-Royce is going to make any difference to the selling of Rolls-Royce cars."

But the agency disagrees and has now written asking for their assurance, in writing, that no further use will be made of the Rolls-Royce name. It says its clients, who have interests in catering services, have a strict policy not to permit the use of their trade mark on any products whatsoever, other than for promotional products directly associated with their own engineering products.



Mr and Mrs Jones, who are now considering their position, say "It just seemed absolutely ridiculous and a lot of fuss about nothing."

The trade mark agent for Rolls-Royce, of Derby, Mr Reg Hargrave, of the international trade mark agency, Hargrave and Company, of London, said: "In strict legal terms Rolls-Royce is a registered trade mark which means quite simply that no one is permitted to use that trade mark without the express authority of the registered owner.

"We no longer live in an age where the manufacturer of a motor car or any other engine restricts his activities to those products and in fact Rolls-Royce is actively involved in a merchandising programme covering a diverse range of products.

"The important point is that however good Mr Jones' product may be, it is only the registered owner of the trade mark who should be entitled to control the quality of the product sold under the trade mark.

"Not only has Mr Jones not made any approach to Rolls-Royce for permission to use the name, so far he has not even responded to the trade mark agent's letter."

Oxfordshire Towns in the Victoria County History

By Matthew Hathaway

On Monday 20th June Dr. Simon Townley came to talk to BLHS about the work he has been involved in whilst helping to research and compile histories of various towns in Oxfordshire for the Victoria County History.

Victoria County History was started in 1899 and aimed to produce a full history of every parish, village and town in England. They vastly underestimated the amount of time it would take to complete and it is still a work in progress today. They are now at the point where a lot of the early contributions are so out of date that they need to be amended, but can't be because there are many areas still waiting to be covered.

Each county is worked on separately and divided up into volumes as necessary. Oxfordshire currently consists of twenty published volumes, eighteen of which are freely available to view online at www.british-history.ac.uk. That includes volume six, which contains Bicester and was originally published in 1959.

Simon then went on to explain how various Oxfordshire towns evolved over time, often following a similar pattern.

Some pre-conquest towns started out as fortified settlements, such as Wallingford, which became fortified in the 9th century during the Viking invasions. This was arranged around a central crossroads, which can still be seen in the modern street plan. However, a castle was added in around 1067 and that moved the focal point of the town further north, to outside the castle gates.

Other pre-conquest towns started out as religious sites. Bampton, like Bicester, developed around an Anglo-Saxon minster church. Some

early finds in the area date back to the 7th century, but it became an ecclesiastical centre in the 8th century and had a minster by the 950s.

Abingdon, Charlbury and Bloxham all started in the same way. These often held markets outside the minster gates, and so trade developed and the town soon followed. Minster settlements are often characterised by having multiple places of worship in a small area.

Unlike Abingdon and Charlbury though, Bampton didn't really succeed. It was redeveloped in the 13th century to expand the market with a designated market place and more regular street plan, but by the following century it had settled firmly as an agricultural base.

Many mediaeval market towns began as planned developments by the local Lord of the Manor in the 11th to 13th centuries. Some were existing villages that got remodelled, others were on completely new sites, but all were done to encourage more tenants and thus generate more profit for the land owner. This usually led to the use of burgage plots, long thin strips of land crammed together along the main streets that gave the maximum number of plots, all with some street frontage for shops and stalls.

Witney was founded by the Bishop of Winchester in the late 12th century. It started with a market place outside the gates of the Bishop's Manor House, next to the church, and grew northwards from there. No foundation charter exists to give specific dates, but there are annual accounts for the Bishops of Winchester and they list rents received from the "borough of Witney" separately from the rest of the manor, which gives some clue as to its development, and when different areas were added.



Henley-on-Thames also has no foundation charter, but evidence suggests a royal foundation by Henry II in the late 12th century. Henry II also founded Woodstock around the same time. It has some characteristics similar to other planned towns: large market place, central crossroads, burgage plots. “New Street” was added around 1307, as dated by land grants. The town was incorporated in 1568 and 1722.

Chipping Norton had no charter, but fairs were granted in 1201 and 1204, and a borough was established by 1241. That original settlement was located down in the valley, but as the market developed it moved up the hill and the town started to follow it. By the mid 12th century the focus of the town was firmly up on the hill. The town was later incorporated in 1607.

Other planned towns, such as Standlake, failed to take off. It had a market granted in 1230, and the market place and burgage plots set out, but by 1500 it had completely lost out to nearby Witney and failed to develop more than a village.

However a town starts, its defining features always include a functioning market, planned layout to optimise space, a variety of non-agricultural jobs, a population of 500 to 1000+ in mediaeval times and 2000 to 3000+ by the 18th century, and a charter or self-government. The functions that make a town include availability of a variety of food and drink, blacksmiths, building trades, leather and textile workers, and various other retailers, usually specialising in particular things. Some of these specialisms included cloth manufacture in Witney, wool in Burford, and a road and river transport hub in Henley.



Left Top: Witney

Left Bottom: Henley-on-Thames

Right Top: Burford

Right Middle: Chipping Norton

Right Bottom: Chipping Norton

Murder by Witchcraft?

Being an account of the sudden and unexplained death of Ferdinand Stanley, Fifth Earl of Derby, Anno Domini 1594.

By Mark Lewandowski

On the sixteenth day of April 1594, Ferdinand, also known as Ferdinando, Stanley, unexpectedly passed away in what would today might be called ‘suspicious circumstances’, in the “flowre of his youth” as one near contemporary source puts it. He had inherited the title, which included the Manor of Bicester amongst its lands, the previous year from his father, Henry Stanley. Dunkin records that manor and estates of nearly all of Bicester, except those of the Priory, had passed in regular descent through several females, but strictly according to the laws of primogeniture from Gilbert Basset the elder to the Earl of Derby. Ferdinand was the great-great-grandson of Thomas Stanley, who had sided with Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field in August 1485, the victor creating him Earl of Derby, in gratitude, on the day of his coronation. According to the will of Henry VIII he had a place in the line of succession of Queen Elizabeth. Although part of the Stanley estates, in 1577 Henry Stanley leased the Manor for 21 years to Thomas Wygyns (or Wykyns) of Bicester.

Ferdinand had attended the University of Oxford and was matriculated in 1572, aged thirteen. A year later he was summoned to the court of Queen Elizabeth, “to be shaped in good manners”. In 1579 he married Alice Spencer, of Althrop, a member of the same family that would give us Lady Diana Spencer.

Bicester’s historian, John Dunkin, goes into the circumstances of Ferdinand Stanley’s death in some detail in his history of the town prefacing his account with the remark that the untimely death was “thought by physicians to have been occasioned by a surfeit taken from violent

exercise in Easter week” which vehemently distempered the whole state of his body, adding that it was “firmly believed by the common people to have been effected by witchcraft”. The murder, if indeed it was, would touch the two paranoias of the age, the threat posed by a hostile and Roman Catholic continent, this was only six years after the defeat of the Armada, and that posed by witchcraft. This was the age when the future King James published his three-volume compendium on witchcraft lore and of the Pendle Witches in Lancashire, coincidentally where most of the following drama takes place. As Dunkin puts it, the incident “affords a curious instance of the credulity of that age”.

Shortly after he became Earl of Derby an attempt was made to involve him in a plot to depose Queen Elizabeth and, taking advantage of his claim to the throne through his mother, Lady Margaret Clifford, descended from Henry VIII’s younger sister, Mary and supported in his will. The Hesketh Plot, as it came to be known, was to kill Queen Elizabeth and to replace her with Ferdinand Stanley, who, it was thought, would be more sympathetic to the Catholic cause. The man chosen for the task of approaching Stanley was his own stepbrother, Richard Hesketh, who travelled from the continent to persuade him to stake his claim and promise Spanish assistance. The Heskeths were ancient retainers of the Stanley family and were family friends, which is why Richard was chosen to approach him about the matter; but with the threat that if he did not support the scheme, shelter the conspirators, or if he divulged the scheme he would die in a most wretched manner. Ferdinand Stanley appears to have played along with the plot, even inviting Richard



Hesketh to leave with him immediately for Windsor Castle where he was due to meet the Queen. This, however, turned out to be a sting operation and too late Richard Hesketh realised that he had swallowed the bait dangled before him. The conspirators had miscalculated and had misjudged Ferdinand Stanley's loyalty. Initially Hesketh protested his innocence but after intensive interrogation by Sir Robert Cecil, confessed to everything in writing, hoping to strike a clemency deal, telling everything that he knew and even offering to act as a double agent. This proved fruitless and he was tried and convicted at St Albans - London was suffering from one of its frequent outbreaks of plague at the time - and executed by hanging on the 29th of November 1593. In view of the earlier threat against not co-operating with or betraying the plot, had Ferdinand Stanley signed his own death warrant?

John Dunkin takes us down a different path. Drawing on older sources, he relates that on Monday the 1st of April 1594 Ferdinand Stanley at his castle at Lathom, was approached by a

woman with a petition requesting that he "grant her a dwelling near his residence, that she might speedily reveal those things which God showed her for his good." The petition was refused, and matters went quiet until the Thursday of that week. That night he had a frightful dream in which he saw the death of his wife Alice and himself being attacked with knives and swords. His cries awoke the other sleepers in the house. Ferdinand was convinced that the dream had been real and that he had been fully conscious the whole time until he was reassured that Alice was alive and well. He had not been alone, as Dunkin puts it "Divers grave men had strange dreams or divinations concerning him about this time."

The following day, Friday, he was in his private chamber at Knowsley with John Golborne, his secretary, when, at six o'clock in the evening, he saw the apparition of a tall man with a ghastly and threatening countenance. When he went to where the spectre had appeared, he fell ill. His secretary, in the room at the time, did not see the apparition. The following day, following another

disturbed night, he and Golborne returned to Lathom. The following day, Sunday, he was much worse and his physician, dear friend and former Oxford tutor, Dr John Case, who had not long departed, was sent for. Returning he was astonished at the sudden and shocking change in his health from the perfect specimen of health of a few days before. He remarked that he had never seen such a sudden change in health with no apparent or obvious cause.

On the following Wednesday, the 10th, a servant identified as Master Halsall, reported finding a wax image in Ferdinand Stanley's room with hair like the Earl's twisted through it. This he immediately threw into the fire, thinking thereby to burn the witch and relieve his lord's suffering. This did not help, and Ferdinand Stanley continued to decline.

The next day, Thursday, Ferdinand Stanley, perhaps realising that he was dying, summoned lawyers and high-placed local relatives to put his affairs in order before he passed away.

All the medicaments and potions of Tudor medicine, which included Bezoar stone and unicorn's horn, were of limited effectiveness. A bezoar is a lump of hardened, undigested material found in the gastrointestinal tract of deer, antelope, goats, oxen and llamas. It was used as a universal antidote to poison, as explained by Professor Snape in the first Harry Potter film, suggesting perhaps that the doctors

attending Ferdinand Stanley did suspect that he had been poisoned. What was used as the horn of a unicorn is not known. Omitting the more graphic details, whatever it was he had taken had caused massive disruption to his urinary and gastrointestinal systems and he had twice fallen into a trance, unable to move, when he was due to take medication.

Ferdinand Stanley himself believed that he had been bewitched. Dunkin reports that "Several justices examined certain witches; one of whom they conjured in the name of Jesus, that if she had bewitched His Honour she would not be able to say the Lord's Prayer: accordingly she never could repeat the petition "forgive us our trespasses," though often repeated to her. "This was a standard test to see if a person under investigation was a witch. It was argued that after swearing an oath of innocence, no witch would be able to recite the Lord's Prayer in its entirety.

In the end, after much more suffering, he cried out against witches and witchcraft, and with his beloved Alice by his bedside, passed away at about four in the afternoon of the 16th. His final words are reported to have been "I am resolved presently to die, and to take away only one part of my arms, I mean the Eagle's Wings, so I will fly swiftly into the bosom of Christ my only saviour." He was laid to rest at the Church of St Peter and St Paul at Ormskirk in Lancashire, the resting place of several other members of the Stanley



family and was succeeded by his younger brother William as the Sixth Earl.

If, as he been warned regarding The Hesketh Plot, he “did not support the scheme, shelter the conspirators, or if he divulged the scheme he would die in a most wretched manner”, and that he had been poisoned, who might have been the guilty party? Suspicion immediately fell on the member of the Stanley household in charge of the earl’s horses. On the day that Ferdinand Stanley fell ill he fled on one of the best horses in his care and was never seen again.

The authorities, however, wanted more than suspicions. Queen Elizabeth heard about the death within a day or two and was inconsolably aggrieved, saying to Sir George Carey (who was Ferdinand’s brother-in-law), “that he was the most honourable, worthiest and absolutely honest man that she had in her life ever known.”

On the 19th of April Queen Elizabeth ordered a full investigation into the death. As the organisers and leaders of the team she chose her Vice Chancellor Thomas Heneage, Master of the Rolls Thomas Egerton and Sir George Carey. Thomas Egerton then formed a working subcommittee of himself, the deceased Earl’s secretary John Golborne and his private chaplain William Leigh; it had been Leigh and Golborne who had ridden with all possible speed from Lancashire to court with news of the Earl’s death. By this time gossip had begun to spread, especially at court, as to the identity of the likely perpetrators. These included the feared and

despised Jesuits, who had ordered for Ferdinand Stanley to be killed, both to avenge the death of Richard Hesketh, and for the mortal sin of refusing a crown, that of England, that the pope, through surrogates, had offered him.

On the supernatural front also, there were investigations into the earl’s death. At some time between the nineteenth and twenty-second, Sir Edward Fitton, the Sheriff of Lancashire, and other justices began to examine the known witches around Lathom. They had come under suspicion because of their interest in the earl’s fortunes since the initial encounter between Ferdinand Stanley and the woman with the petition at the castle there on the 1st of April. The decade between 1587 and 1597 saw prosecutions for witchcraft reach their highest point in all English history. On the 28th of April Sir George Carey reported to his superiors that owing to the chance discovery of a letter at Lathom, he had determined that witches and witchcraft were the culprits, not poisoners.

At this point the trail goes cold and nothing more is heard about the investigations into the death. Amongst Tudor historians only one, John Stow bought into the murder by witchcraft theory. The others, led by William Camden, believed that Ferdinand Stanley had been poisoned, the consensus of opinion being that the Jesuits were responsible. Most of the people of England agreed and, according to contemporary sources, remained outraged. By the time of Queen Elizabeth’s death in 1603 the matter had been all but forgotten.

Bygone Bicester

All articles taken from the Bicester Advertiser for September

29th September 1882

Wedding Festivities at Bicester

On September 12th, the picturesque and quiet little village of Eastham was the scene of much gaiety and rejoicing on the occasion of the marriage of Miss Frances Gertrude Tobin to Captain L.E. Coker, of the Royal Artillery, which took place at the parish church, Eastham.

The bride is the third daughter of Mr James Aspinall Tobin, of Eastham, Cheshire, and the bridegroom, whose residence is Bicester House, is the eldest son of the late Major Coker.

The event had been held in pleasant anticipation for some time, and the inhabitants of the pretty village of Eastham had evidently determined that no trouble or pains should be spared to do honour to a bride who had endeared herself to them by many acts of kindness and years of association in Sunday school and parochial work. The weather was in the last degree favourable, the sun shining brightly throughout the greater part of the day, and the time of year favoured the way in which the villagers expressed their feelings of goodwill, namely, by the erection of floral arches and the display in profusion of flowers, and evergreens.

The principal arch spanned the roadway close to the carriage road to Eastham House and on one side bore the words "Long life and happiness to the bride and bridegroom" and "One mind", while on the other side there was "Prosperity to the houses of Tobin and Coker" and "One heart". On another arch the subscription was "Haste to the wedding", and on the other side "Long life and happiness".

In addition to these, almost every cottage was gay with evergreens and bunting, while rows of flags were suspended from the trees on either side of the road, and eight flags waved from the beautiful church steeple.

Long before the hour fixed for the ceremony, every available seat in the sacred edifice had

been occupied, and hundreds of people thronged the churchyard, anxious to get a sight of the bridal party. The church was most tastefully decorated for the occasion, with flowers and beautiful plants by the friends of the bride and bridegroom.

At half-past eleven the fair young bride with her father arrived at the church gate, and was there received by her six bridesmaids. At this moment the sun was shining brightly, and the scene was beautiful in the extreme as the procession advanced along the path to the church door. As the bride, leaning on her father's arm, and escorted by her bridesmaids, entered the church, the crowded congregation, composed of the fashionable residents of the neighbourhood and the villagers, rose en masse, and while the choir sang the bridal hymn "The Voice that Breathed O'er Eden", the effect was most striking.

At the entrance to the chancel the bridegroom, with his best man, Mr Wilford Lloyd, Royal Artillery, received the wedding party, and the service proceeded, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Cadwallader Coker, rector of Fringford and uncle of the bridegroom, assisted by the Rev. W.E. Torr, vicar of Eastham, and the Rev. E.A. Pitcairn Campbell, cousin of the bride, the bride being given away by her father.

The bride was attired in a dress of ivory brocade over a satin petticoat trimmed with deep flounces of old Flanders lace. Her veil, over a wreath of orange blossom, was fastened with diamond stars, and she wore a bouquet of natural orange blossoms, fastened by a large diamond and pearl bee. She carried an immense and exquisite bouquet of white orchids and other exotics.

The six bridesmaids were dressed alike in cream moire, trimmed with brown velvet, over ficelle lace petticoats, and wore brown velvet hats, tan mousequetaire gloves, and bronze

shoes. They carried baskets of choice roses and ferns, and each wore an old silver chatelaine sent bottle, the gift of the bridegroom.

At the conclusion of the service Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" pealed from the organ, and the newly-wedded couple headed the procession through the churchyard, where a perfect ovation was accorded them. The children from the village schools, all wearing black straw hats trimmed with scarlet ribbons (given by Mr and Mrs Tobin), lined the way and strewed the path with fresh flowers.

No sooner had the bride and bridegroom reached their carriage than the horses were removed from it and it was dragged by the villagers, amid the cheers of the spectators, to Eastham House. Over the hall door at the house an immense horseshoe of white flowers – emblematic of good luck – was suspended.

After the wedding breakfast, amid renewed expressions of goodwill and regard, Captain and Mrs Coker drove in an open carriage to Hooton Station, en route for the North. As they left the band on the lawn played "Auld Lang Syne", and at the lodge gates the whole of the village had assembled, and with cheers again and again renewed bade an enthusiastic farewell to the happy couple.

In the afternoon Mr and Mrs Aspinall Tobin entertained a large circle of friends, including all the women and children in the village, and sports were carried on till about seven o'clock, when the villagers adjourned to the schools, and danced away merrily till a late hour, so that all classes participated in the rejoicings.

Whilst those who had known the bride so long in the pretty Cheshire village rejoiced with such heartiness; those who had the pleasure of the acquaintance of the gallant captain in our immediate district expressed their hope that the union would be one which would tend to endure in a wider area the bride and the bridegroom also.

So to the subject of our own festivities. To commemorate the recent marriage a tea was arranged to be given in the grounds of Bicester House, by the kind permission of Henry Tubb, Esq., to the cottage and allotment tenants, with their families, on this estate.

The invited guests began to arrive about half-past two when they were welcomed by Mrs F.J. Myers, Mr and Mrs Henry Tubb, the Misses Myers and Miss Stratton. The vicar was also present.

Games were immediately commenced. There was cricket, quoits, swings, and a variety of races were arranged, the winners receiving very useful prizes. First the little ones (in many instances very little ones indeed) were selected for a handicap race; then the men, and afterwards the elder women contended for the mastery in a one hundred yards race, and right earnestly they entered into the sport.

At four o'clock the whole company, numbering nearly 100, sat down to a most excellent tea, provided in a large tent near the lawn, their wants being most assiduously attended to by the ladies we mentioned above.

After the repast games were renewed, and carried on, if possible, with even greater alacrity, than before. The women commenced cricket, and many a hearty laugh was caused by the extraordinary "hits" they made and the superior bowling exhibited. This was most amusing to the elder portion of the company. Tugs-of-war were arranged, and heavy tugs they were too, there was also some good jumping. A balloon was successfully started during the afternoon.

As the shades of evening began to appear the large tent was lighted up, beer and tobacco was served out to the men, the women (those who used it) were regaled also with something to tickle the nose, whilst to the strains of the Bicester Volunteer Band the younger portion "tripped it lightly" for an hour or two.

About seven o'clock Mr Henry Tubb stepped forward and called for three cheers for Captain and Mrs Coker, and we can assure our readers the call was not in vain. They were given right heartily; and the same ovation was accorded to Mr and Mrs H. Tubb, and Mr and Mrs Myers. Thus ended a very pleasant afternoon to celebrate the nuptials between Captain Coker and Miss Frances Gertrude Tobin, and we sincerely trust that the good feeling exhibited may be continued for many years.

We cannot conclude without mentioning that Captain Coker bore the entire expense of this undertaking and further expressed the hope that the afternoon might be one of thorough enjoyment. During the proceedings Mr and Mrs Tubb were most indefatigable in their endeavours to find amusement for the guests, and right well they accomplish the task, and the company, it could be seen, appreciated the effort. Mr Phillips too, of the Angel Inn, who was interested with the catering on the occasion, merits a word of praise for the admirable manner in which he carried out the arrangements entrusted to him.

14th September 1917

Entertainment at St Edburg's Hall

The entertainment given last night by the patients and friends of the Bicester V.A.D. Hospital was, as expected, a great success. So great was the rush for seats that many found they were unobtainable and had to be content with standing room.

The inclusion of several well-known artistes in the programme undoubtedly contributed to the success of the evening, as also did the appearance of Mr George Esmond who created no small amount of consternation. It was only at the last minute that he was known to be on leave, and his services were quickly "commandeered." Although he had no music with him, he delighted the audience with humorous patter, occasionally bringing in a few lines of some well-known ludicrous song.

Mrs F. Woods sang with her usual effect and was deservedly encored. Miss Rogers rendered "Until" in a most promising style and was also encored. Private Harding, a patient at the hospital, sang "Two Eyes of Grey" and later "He Lives in a Bigger House Now," the latter in a real cockney style. The Misses Bayfield were exceptionally good in their duet and the audience was not satisfied until they had been on a second time.

The sketches given by the patients were both very good and great credit reflects on those responsible. Miss Smeaton's recitations were much enjoyed and she was the recipient of much deserved applause. Encores were given in almost every case so that the entertainment lasted longer than was expected, but no-one grumbled at that. Indeed, many would have stayed much longer to have heard some of the artistes again.

It was very successful and the hospital funds will be swelled considerably. The following is a programme of the entertainment:

Part One

Pianoforte solo – Miss Smeaton

Song – God Send You Back to Me – Private Chatfield

Piano sketch – Mr G. Esmond

Song – Two Eyes of Grey – Private Harding

Song - The Flag That Never Comes Down – Mrs Woods

Song - Down the Vale – Gunner Paternoster

Recitation – Drake's Drum – Miss Amethe Smeaton

Song – The Rosary – Lance-Corporal Ray

Song – Until – Miss Rogers

Sketch – a) An Estaminet in Rest Billets, b) In a Trench – Lance-Corporal Traynor, Lance-Corporal Ray, Corporal Mallett, Gunners Sumner and Paternoster, Driver Pickering, Privates Smart, Fawcett, Chatfield.

Part Two

Duet - The Misses Bayfield

Song - Keep the Home Fires Burning – Private Knott

Piano sketch – Mr G. Esmond

Song - When You Come Home – Private Chatfield

Recitation – Three short stories – Miss A. Smeaton

Song - He Lives in a Bigger House Now – Private Harding

Song – Cherry Stones – Mrs woods

Piano sketch – Mr G. Esmond

Farce – Beautiful for Ever – Corporal Mallett, Private Smart, Lance-Corporal Ray, Private Fawcett

Bicester and Ploughley War Weapons Week

Although comparatively little time was available for preparations in the town and district in connection with the Bicester and Ploughley War Weapons Week, a great deal of work has been accomplished in the arrangement of the various events, and the officials and various committees are to be congratulated on the success which has so far attended their efforts. For a week such as this much hard work is essential, and many are the problems which arise even after the attractions have been finally decided upon. But the organisers have entered so wholeheartedly into their tasks and have displayed such determination that, with the co-operation of so many outside helpers, they have surmounted the many difficulties with which they were confronted and have ensured the success of this most important venture.

War Weapons Weeks are primarily organised as a means of bringing home to the public the urgent necessity for economy in spending and the vital need of the country for all the money that can be spared for the successful prosecution of the war. Attractive investments are offered by the Government and special efforts are made to persuade the public to take them up. That they have done so all over the country is apparent from the figures which have already been published – astounding results in many cases – and Bicester and district, although later than most in their effort, have shown a worthy response. Speculation was rife as to the final figures, but many were certain that the target figure of £100,000 would be left far behind, as indeed it was exceeded at the end of the third day.

In Bicester the arrangements have been carried through very satisfactorily, due for the most part to the willing and wholehearted co-operation of the RAF, the Royal Berks Regiment and Pioneer Corps with the Secretaries (Messrs L.T. Evans and E. Roderick), on whose shoulders much of the organising work has fallen. Excellent assistance has also been forthcoming from numerous people and in various ways, especially in the matter of labour, hire of materials, use of implements and a host of other necessities.

The indicator, the arrangements for which were most ably conducted by Major L.A. Coker, was built by Messrs B. Jackson and Son, and was erected on Saturday morning on the surface shelter on the market square, adjoining which was a raised platform.

Long before the advertised procession was due to start on the opening day (Saturday) people began to line the streets and Market Square, and very soon there were hundreds assembled. Thanks to Supt. Ponsford and Capt. Jago, the police and military traffic control personnel co-operated most effectively in the control and diversion of traffic and the management of the crowds, Market Square being lined off for the purpose of the opening ceremonials. The bypass road from King's End to Field Street was opened for a short time by permission of the County Council and Mr C.H. Gander (divisional surveyor).

At 2:30pm the procession was assembled on the bypass road near the Junior School, and half-an-hour later, under the command of Captain J.J. Martin, MC, it moved off en route for the market square, via Field Street, North Street and Sheep Street.

In Sheep Street Lord Bicester, President of the Committee, who was accompanied by his aide for the day (Major Coker) took the salute as the parade marched past. Led by the police and special constables, the procession moved on to the square, the two RAF bands forming up behind the air raid shelter, while the armoured cars, searchlight unit, ambulances, feeding kitchen, rescue squads and first-aid parties moved slowly round the shelter to drive off to their bases. The Bicester and Stratton Audley Fire Services moved off to their station.

Meanwhile the Pioneer Corps took up positions to the right and left of the platform, the RAF, WAAF, ARP wardens, telephonists, rescue squads, ambulance drivers, first-aid parties and VAD occupied the centre of the square. It was a matter for general regret that, with every other department of civil defence represented, Bicester Home Guard should be absent. The

reason given, we understand, is that a representative number could not be mustered, which was disappointing considering the importance of the occasion.

It was a most impressive moment as Lord Bicester appeared on the platform for the general salute; the rifles of the troops present, with bayonets fixed, moving as one to the "present arms." Having taken the salute, Lord Bicester proceeded to inspect the whole parade, accompanied by Captain Martin, Captain Smith (Pioneer Corps), Major Coker, Major Moir (ARP sub-controller), and the respective chairmen of the Ploughley and Bicester Councils (Messrs W.A. Cattell and J. Leach).

Following the inspection, Lord Bicester again mounted the platform, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Colonel the Hon. Angus McDonnell, who has recently arrived back from America, where he has been with Lord Halifax on his tours. Mr W.A. Cattell and Mr J. Leach were also on the platform.

Led by the music of the two RAF bands, the crowd sang "Land of Hope and Glory," and Lord Bicester then introduced the Hon. Angus McDonnell, who spoke of the effort America was making to supply us with equipment to bring the war to a successful issue. He said we did not sometimes realise exactly that the success the Germans had had was due to the fact that since 1933 they had adopted the slogan of "guns instead of butter," and forced it on all their nationals who did not agree with them. The result was that they had turned out the most powerful mechanical war machine in the world. When war started it was not men they killed so much as bringing destruction to property. We did not realise the danger at the time of Munich, or even when Poland was attacked. It was not till France gave in that we realised the terrible peril we were in, and that we stood alone in the world. We had a respite, thanks to the very gallant young men in the Air Force, and the Germans were prevented from the destruction of this country. It was a marvellous performance, and was probably the turning point of the war. The courage of the civilian population had, he said, aroused America, who had begun to realise we were holding the front light against the slavedom which beset Germany and which Germany wanted to force on others. The result was we were now getting ahead in the things we needed.

Col. McDonnell spoke of the large factories he had visited in America which were wholly engaged in production for our country. Six months ago it was a stream, now it was a flood,

and soon it will be a torrent. We, however, should not relax for a moment, for we could only win when every individual made some self-sacrifice. Everything that we denied ourselves and put into the war machine would ensure freedom of life, freedom of thought. "You must give willingly and generously to provide equipment for the best men and women in the world in this fight against Nazi tyranny," he concluded.

After the speech, the Lord Lieutenant read a telegram from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging the people of the Bicester and Ploughley districts to respond generously during the forthcoming week to the call for more financial aid. Lord Bicester had replied, "We will do our best." "We are," said the Lord Lieutenant, "more fortunate in our neighbourhood than those who have had their homes and businesses bombed and cannot, therefore, contribute so well to war weapons weeks as we perhaps can. I ask you all to spend as little as possible and to put all you can into war savings. By doing so you will not only be doing a very patriotic act, but will also be making the finest investment in the world. It is with great pleasure that I now declare this war weapons week open, and wish it every success."

The ceremony concluded with the singing of the hymn, "Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past," and the National Anthem, and Lord Bicester then opened the selling centre at Midland Marts offices (kindly lent for the week), where he purchased the first security. The Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation at Chesterton Lodge are kindly staffing the selling centre throughout the week, with Mr B. Harding in charge.

In the evening an RAF band, conducted by Sergeant Fletcher, gave a selection of music, and later over 200 people attended at St Edburg's Hall for the opening dance, for which the RAF Sextette generously gave their services free. As one can imagine, in a hall of the size of St Edburg's some congestion was inevitable with such a crowd, but everyone appeared imbued with the spirit of the occasion, and all spent a happy and enjoyable evening. A spot dance, with a savings certificate as the prize for the lady partner, was won by Miss Ruby Dagley, of the Dorset Dairy, and the certificate was taken out for her by the donor, Captain D. Smith.

On Monday, the Royal Berks mounted a guard on the Market Square, for the raising of the indicator, this being carried out by Mr W.A. Cattell (chairman of the Ploughley Rural Council) who is also chairman of the War Weapons Week Committee. He explained beforehand that the figures shown would represent Saturday's

contribution only, and would not include Post Office returns. He then raised the indicator to the £40,000 mark, amid cheers, the actual figures being £40,810.

The crowd then moved off to Priory Road, where an ARP display was staged, the fire services co-operating. The Regal Cinema was again the target for the evening's activities, which were very ably carried through and provided a great deal of interest for the onlookers.

Mr George Lapper, of Home Farm, kindly presented a calf for auction at Bicester Market on Monday, and Midland Marts opened with a donation of 20 guineas. This was followed by other donations, which, with £4 4s. obtained for the calf, made about £50. Another gift (£1 9s.) was also received from Mrs G. Plater, from the weekly whist drive at the Evacuee Women's Club.

On Tuesday evening, a crowd assembled again in front of the indicator, the guard being mounted by the RAF. Councillor J. Leach (chairman of the Bicester Urban District Council) mounted the platform promptly at 7 o'clock and the usual excitement was evident as he moved the indicator up to beyond the £70,000 mark, which represented the amount subscribed up to Monday night, the exact total at that time being £78,600.

St Edburg's Hall was crowded later in the evening for the variety show given by artistes serving at two RAF Stations. Flight Officer Ridley had worked hard in presenting this show, and although he was unfortunate in having to alter his programme at the last moment, due to the exigencies of the Service, he nevertheless managed to put on a thoroughly enjoyable concert, which he also compered. The programme included tap dancing by four members of the WAAF, a string trio, songs, sketches, a harmonica trio, songs at the piano, impressions, and a 15-minute turn by the well known RAF Sextette. The lucky programme winner was Air Captain Enticknap, who will receive three half-crown savings stamps.

The Ladies' Committee, who made themselves responsible for a number of events, arranged a jumble sale on Tuesday afternoon, Dr G.N. Montgomery kindly lending his garage, and a sum of £12 was realised.

The indicator having almost reached the £80,000 mark, there was a great deal of speculation on Wednesday as to whether the target figure would be eclipsed as a result of the previous day's investments, but there was a

feeling among the majority that the £100,000 mark would be passed. The Pioneers mounted the guard for the ceremony and Wing Commander Perkins, a member of the Executive Committee, who has done much good work in connection with the effort, had the honour of moving the indicator. When the red pointer moved up to the £100,000 mark there was loud cheering and great excitement, and speculation was rife as to what the figures would be at the close of the week. It was a matter for satisfaction and congratulation to all concerned that in three days the target should have been gained, but the public were at once reminded that they had several days to go to subscribe even more and were urged to double the target figure.

Prior to the ceremony a number of men of the Pioneer Corps gave a display of arms drill, to the delight of the onlookers, and later the repeat performance of the RAF concert again drew a large crowd to St Edburg's Hall. An enthusiastic reception was given at the close to Flight Officer Ridley and the artistes. The winner of the lucky programme number was Master M. Spencer.

Thursday evening there was a crowded audience at the boxing tournament by RAF contestants, and in the afternoon a baby show, organised by Mrs J. Allum, proved a great attraction. The first prize winner in the six to 12-months-old category (bottle-fed) was Francis Blake, son of Mr and Mrs George Blake, of North Street, Bicester. A social followed in the evening, and was well attended.

Friday evening there was a whist drive in St Edburg's Hall. Then on Saturday the indicator was moved by Sidney Wooderson, world-famous miler, who is the British record holder and present day champion. A concert was then held at the Regal Cinema on Sunday and brought the week to a close.

The exact figure announced by Lord Bicester yesterday, as representing the Bicester and Ploughley War Weapons Week total, was £230,088 16s. 11d. This includes a gift to the nation, from entertainments, etc, in the whole area, of £1,000. The result is considered in official circles as an extremely good one, and the amount represents approximately £12 12s. per head of the population.

Lord Bicester, who was President of the War Weapons Week, has received the following telegram from Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer: "Please convey my congratulations to the people of Bicester and Ploughley on the splendid response to their War Weapons Week."

Authors Log 150-year History of Village School

Next month pupils and teachers past and present celebrate the 150th anniversary of Launton village school.

The History of Launton School 1839-1989; by Pat Tucker and Mary Brydon, two members of Launton Historical Society, is being published to commemorate the occasion. The following is one extract from the book:

When William Hen died in 1803 he made a bequest of "...the sum of Fifty Pounds for the Instruction and Benefit of some Poor Children of the Parish of Launton ... particularly to teach them to Read and learn to do their duty hereinafter in life. And I hope it will be instrumental in the saving of their Souls..."

From the notice still hanging in the school it will be seen the school was not built until 36 years after William Hen's death. What was the reason for this long delay and did Launton really have to wait until 1839 before its children received any education?

It seems the first person who was interested in providing education for children in Launton was Phillip Stubbs. He was rector from 1719-1738 but had previously worked in London for the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, which aimed to provide children with a Christian education by means of establishing charity schools throughout the country.

He decided that Bicester needed such a school and in 1721 he ordered materials for the 50 children from Bicester and surrounding villages who were to be educated there and he also saw the teacher was to be comfortably lodged.

In his Visitation Return of 1738 Stubbs wrote: "There is none (school) within this parish, but one established ... in the parish of Bicester ... towards the settling of which I bought £5 along with me and a subscription roll by way of

encouragement ... Launton has sent 2 boys from the first opening of it, on the Rectors Subscribing 40s. per annum."

The accounts of the Bicester Charity Role mention Thomas Stevens of Launton in the years 1849, '50 and '52 but no other children are listed as coming from Launton, nor is mention made of any rector of Launton attending school meetings or making contributions to the subscription list.

Phillip Stubbs died late in 1738 and the four rectors following him do not appear to have supported the school in Bicester.

According to Oxford Diocese records, Lady Jersey, of Middleton Stoney Park, and her husband owned a large acreage of land in Launton and she supported a school until her husband sold their land.

The rector, who for so long had been so uninterested in the school, was William





Above: The earliest known photograph of pupils and staff at Launton School in 1895. The headmaster was Mr Francis Abraham Harrison.

Below: Launton Primary School pupils and staff in September 1989.



Frederick Browne, rector from 1779 to 1837. From answers he gave to inquiries about the school it seems he might well have been hostile to the idea of educating labourer's children.

His successor, James Blomfield, was a man of very different ideas and the present school building was started in January 1839, and completed in November.

The building cost £149 7s. 7d. and is the low-roofed single-storey building standing parallel to Bicester Road, Launton.

The site was granted by the rector from Glebe land and measured 8 1/2 poles, valued at £3 3s. 9d. The £100 already in trust was added to with donations of £10 each from the Bishop of London (Launton was then in his diocese), the Dean and Chapter of Westminster (the Lords of the Manor of Launton) and Richard Wootten (a benefactor to the people of Launton and Oxford); £5 each was donated by John Ashby junior and James Blomfield.

The building was "...a room 33 feet by 15, in which the boys and girls and Sunday Schools are instructed together ... 50 boys, 42 girls and 29 infants, chiefly day scholars..." according to Diocese records.

The original doorway faced the street and has been replaced by a central two-light window.

There are very few details of the early days; however, in June, 1839, William Botterill was described as "schoolmaster" in the register when one of his children was baptised.

In the 1841 census, there were 134 children aged between three and ten in the village, but it is not known which attended the school. In the same census there is evidence that the rector may have been running a small school for the sons of gentleman in the rectory.

The original school building proved too small and Blomfield's successor described it in September 1845 as "inadequate" and he applied for aid towards building two more classrooms because the population had increased since 1841 "...as many new cottages have been built."

Extensions proposed were to provide 6 square feet of accommodation for each child and to have two 60ft playgrounds.

It was now planned to build an apartment for a teacher over the original building but in 1846 this was found to be impracticable because the foundations were not deep enough.

Application was made to the Incorporated National Society for Promoting Education for the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church for help towards the £200 cost since it was impossible to raise sufficient funds locally, the men being mostly agricultural labourers and the women lace makers and there were no resident proprietors who might make charitable donations.

The work to build two new classrooms was carried out between May and November 1846. Despite grants from the National Society and some money being raised locally, the rector had to put his hand deep into his pocket to ensure the work was completed.

The running costs included: Master's salary £46, mistress £20, stationary, fuel and candles at least £14.

Children over seven paid towards the cost of their education and £15 was subscribed by well-wishers. The rector made up the deficit. He was doubtless anxious to ensure the success of the school as a rival school had been set up by the Nonconformists in what later became known as the Congregational Chapel schoolroom/hall in Station Road. The schoolroom is now a private house and the chapel is still used for services.

In the 1851 census, the National School teacher was named as Elisha Grimsdale, aged 26, born at Penn, Buckinghamshire, and living with his sister, Jane.

The Nonconformist school (now known as the British School as it was supported by the British and Foreign School Society) was taught by Annie Clift, aged 28, born at Tewkesbury.

In 1850, James Charles Blomfield, son of James, became rector and was a great supporter of the school. In his Visitation Returns for 1854 he states the school was "supported by myself and a few subscriptions and children's pence" and also that an "Evangelical adult school was established this last winter, but only a few come and it is at present an experiment here."

The first recorded visit by an HM inspector was in 1854. His report was not encouraging: "The

master lacked exertion and the 40 children were inattentive and indolent." A year later there was a different picture as the local newspaper described how tea was laid out in the rectory gardens for the children. This was followed by "a distribution of prizes in Bibles, testaments and prayers ... each child receiving a prize according to the value of tickets obtained for good conduct."

Diocesan exams were held to encourage religious knowledge among the children, but from a contemporary newspaper report it sounds as if the exam was more or less held in public.

The children from Bicester and surrounding villages met in a Bicester school to answer questions on Scripture, the Prayer Book, History, Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic etc while "there was a great number of neighbouring clergy, their ladies and other visitors present."

The school treat in September started with a parade of the newly-formed brass band and the older children from Grange Farm, home of Thomas Bedford, churchwarden and school manager, "...the children carry various appropriate flags and banners."

Tea on the rectory lawn was "plum cake, bread and butter and tea in profusion," later "various entertainments were provided for the children, whilst sweets and nuts were freely distributed amongst them."

From November 1865 teachers kept log books, which reflected on the school and the times. The school day started with the ringing of the bell at 8:45am and again at 9am; there was a break at 11am and lunch was from 12 until 2pm; lessons ended at 4pm.

The rector came into the school on Tuesday and Thursday mornings to take scriptural lessons. The children were obliged to attend Sunday school.

The condition of the school sometimes made teaching difficult. On January 11th 1866, the head wrote: "I could only use one end of the school room today because the snow had beaten through one of the windows and made the other end very wet." On the following day, the head David Bridges "dismissed the school at 3:45 this afternoon because the fires were out and we had no more fuel."

One of the head's biggest worries were the reports of the inspectors because the report was the basis on which a grant was made, the largest part of the school income. A report made a few weeks after Bridges arrived commented upon the poor standard but explained this has been mainly due to the previous master having been uncertificated. It was decided Bridges could not be blamed for the new standard and he would not be financially penalised. But he was warned that a great improvement would be expected in children's work.

The year 1866 was a time of crisis in farming. On February 28th Bridges records that he took the children to church for a "day of Humiliation and Fasting for the Cattle Plague."

It was not all hard work and gloom. May Day – the start of the school year – was always a holiday. The children who sang in the church choir took part in the Church Choral Festival in Bicester and most children went to the Bicester fair in August (the fair still continues in Market Square, though in a much reduced form).

The rector allowed the boys to play cricket in one of his fields, but Bridges was displeased when they returned for afternoon school "...their hair was very untidy and their faces dirty."

The date of the summer holidays depended upon the weather and was not held until the harvest was ready.

A new head, Thomas Newton (September 1866 to January 1873), was worried about standards after he took over from Bridges. He cancelled the Easter Monday holiday and the effort was rewarded: "The school has made great progress during the year. The discipline is admirable. The needlework and copybooks are very good. The reading ... is well taught. The mental arithmetic and religious knowledge very good." This time the full grant was paid.

Bicester Shops: 47 Market Square

By Matthew Hathaway



Print of Market Hill in the early 1800s



No. 47 Market Square stands on the southern corner of the Island Block, opposite the King's Arms. It was built in 1698, possibly by a member of the Burges family, with retail space on the ground floor and a private residence on the upper floors. Whoever was responsible for its construction must have been a very wealthy local tradesman to have afforded such an eye-catching design. From its square projecting turret with four-sided cupola roof and ball pinnacle, to the sheer number of windows (two years after the window tax began), it would have been expensive to construct and maintain.

Over the years it has been more than just a retail space and family home.

George Richard Castle opened his auctioneers and estate agents office there in about 1885. He had originally started working as a clerk for Jonas Paxton, auctioneer, in the 1850s, and by 1866 they had gone into partnership together. But the partnership was dissolved in 1885 and George set up on his own. He doesn't seem to have been as successful as Jonas, but he did

continue to run his business until his death in 1894, aged 62.

At some point the building seems to have been split into two separate premises. The ground floor was eventually taken over by Midland Marts auctioneers and estate agents, who operated there well into the 1950s. Later it was a branch of Leamington Spa Building Society, and now it is the home of A-Plan Insurance.

Meanwhile the upper floors have been both a Masonic Lodge, before they took over the Methodist Church in North Street (now Weyland Hall), and it then became the home of Bicester Town Council's offices until they relocated to the Garth.

Bicester Shops

22 & 24 Sheep Street

By Matthew Hathaway

24 Sheep Street was built in 1689 and had been a draper's shop since at least the 1830s. Run successively from then by the Hitchman family, James Greenfield, and William Hemingway. In 1896, Thomas Druce, a draper and house furnisher in Witney, purchased the property and opened his shop there.

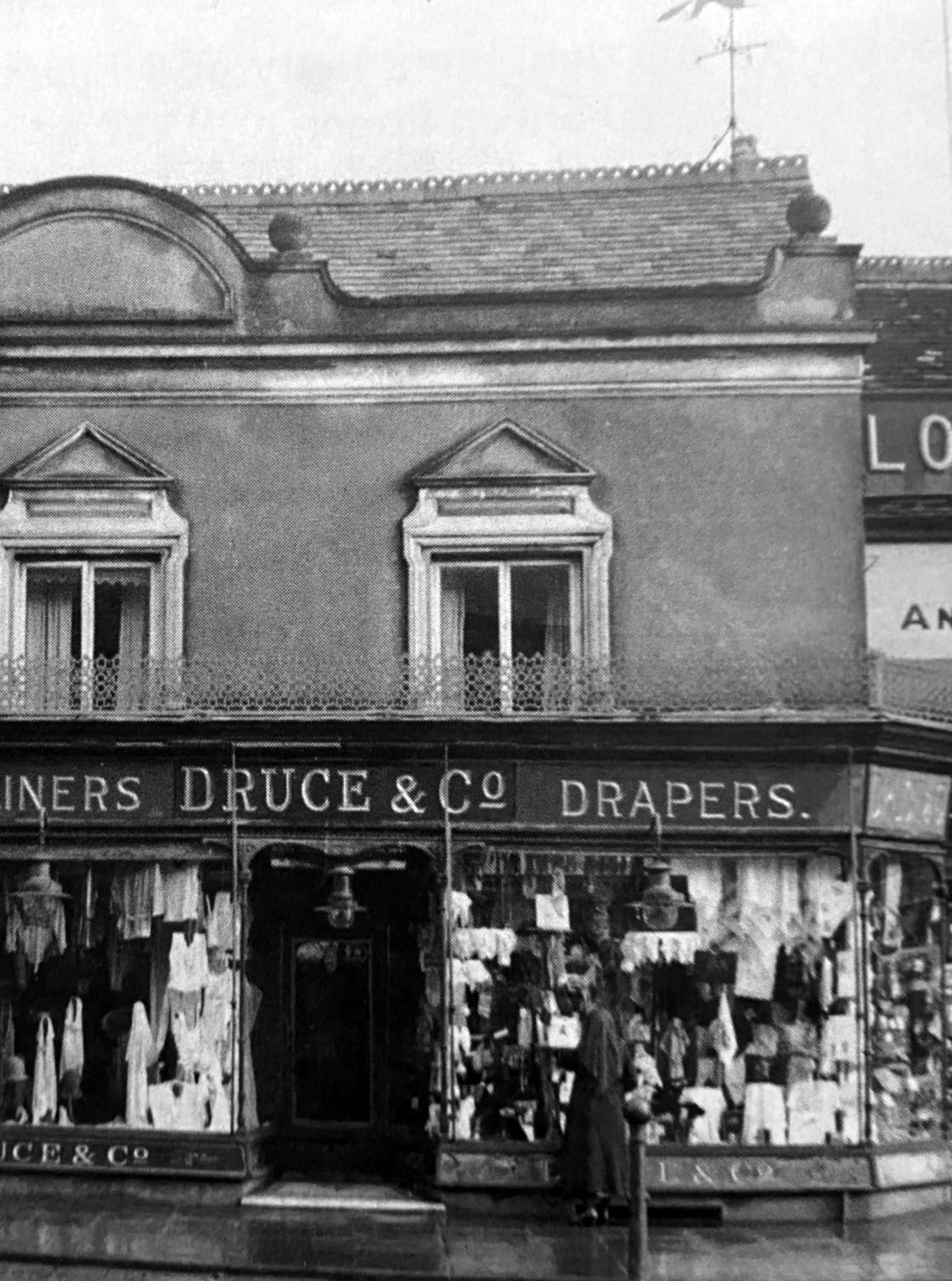
He also purchased 22 Sheep Street, "London House", soon after and expanded the business into there. It had formerly been the Bear Inn, under the ownership of Shillingford's Brewery in Market Square. Thomas was a supporter of the Temperance Movement, which may explain why he chose to purchase the pub next door and close it down.

A trade directory in 1903 listed Thomas's businesses as: draper, gents' outfitter, dressmaker, silk mercer, carpet warehouseman and funeral furnisher. In 1907 he purchased 26 Sheep Street, and opened a separate business there dealing in house furnishings and antiques.

In 1916 number 24 caught fire late one night and Thomas, his family, and the staff who lived above the shop all had to be evacuated. He repaired the building and reopened the store, but went on to retire in the 1920s and leased number 24 to Weston



Druce's main premises at 24 Sheep Street

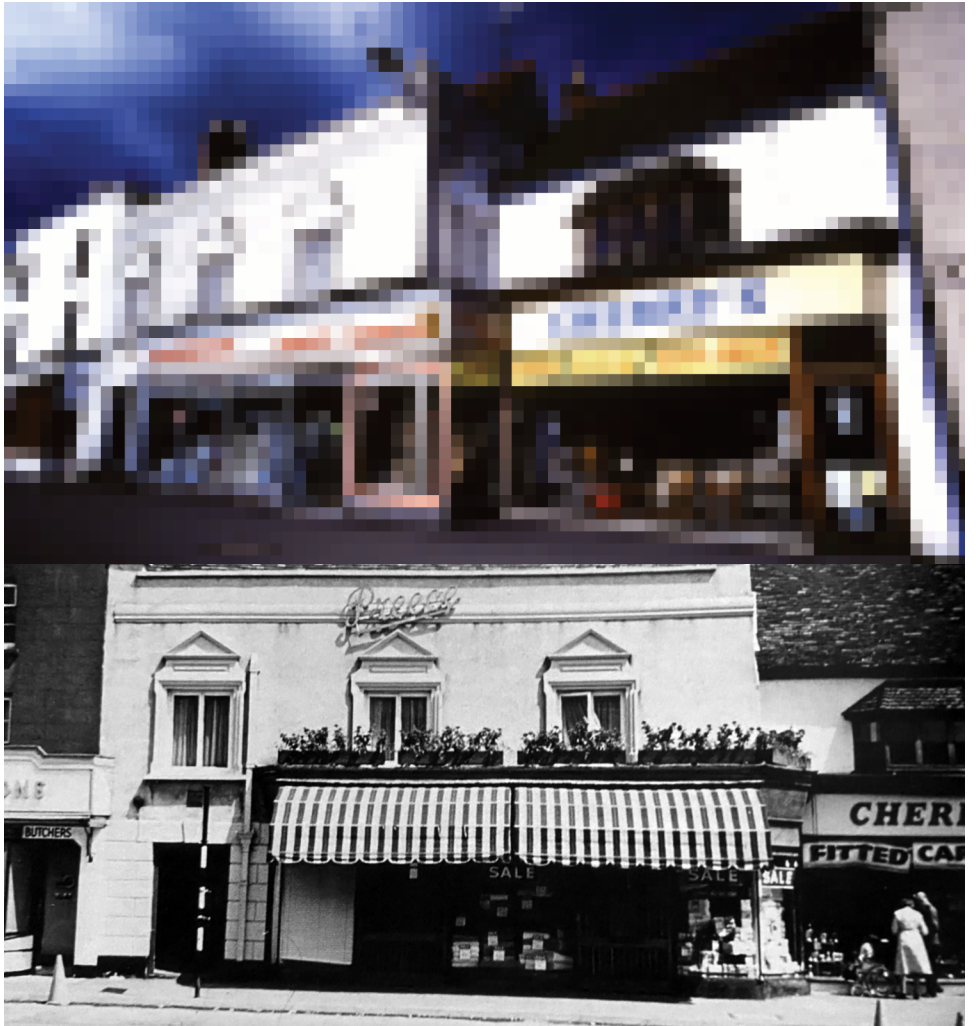


Blake and sold number 22 to his former manager, James Grimes.

Thomas died in 1927 and in 1935 number 24 was sold by the executors of his estate to Henry Preece who took over the draper's and ladies' clothing business and continued it until he retired in 1970. The property was then taken over by Derek and Mae Sambrook who opened a carpets and curtains store there which operated until 1998. The building currently stands empty, but it was most recently a branch of Edinburgh Woollen Mill.

Meanwhile, James Grimes continued his successful men's outfitters business in number 22 until 1953 when the property was taken over by Howard Cherry who opened Cherry's furniture store. Howard was the fourth generation of his family to be a shopkeeper in Bicester. His parents, William and Grace Cherry, had opened the Handy Stores in 1927, and his grandfather and great-grandfather, Charles and Thomas Clifton, opened a grocer's shop in North Street in about 1880.

Cherry's continued to operate until 2011, one year before Howard died. Martin's newsagents then relocated there, along with Bicester Post Office, and they are still there today.





Left Top: Sambrook's and Cherry's in the 1980s

Left Bottom: Preece's store front, 1960s

Above: Druce's shop, the morning after the fire in 1916

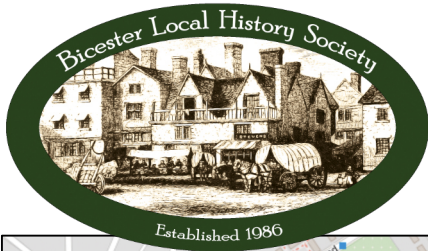
Below: Grimes & Sons shopfront in the 1920s. Notice that "Druce & Co" is still displayed below the windows as the frontage was kept by James Grimes and they initially just changed the name above the door.



Picture Round Up - 1970s



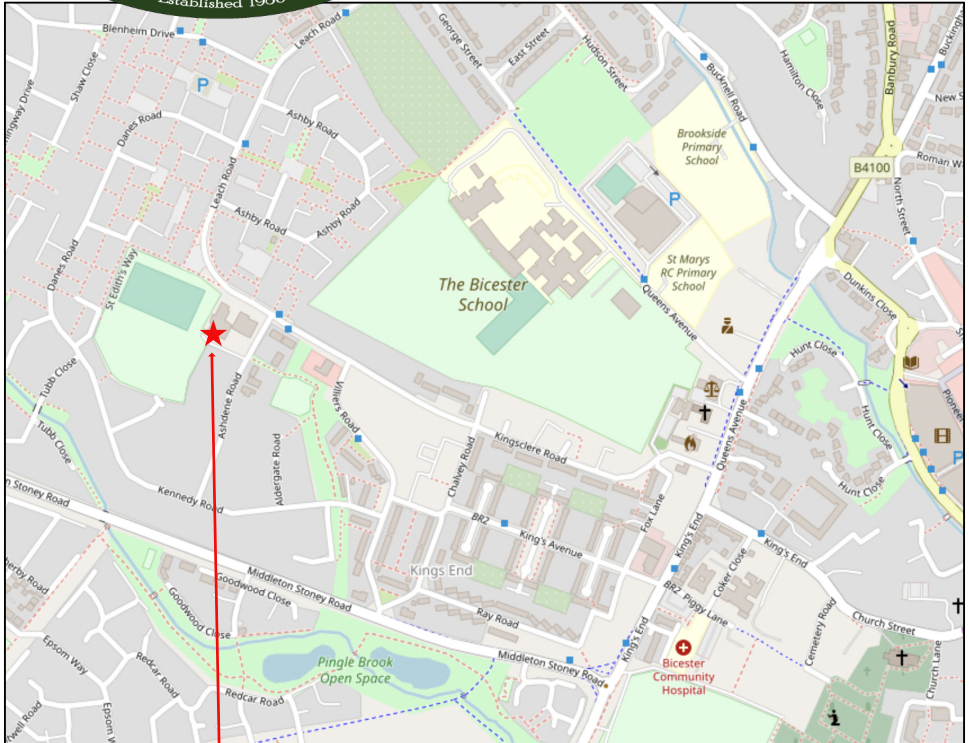




BLHS's monthly meetings are held on the third Monday of every month (except August) and begin at 7:30pm. Members entry is free, visitors pay £3 at the door. Refreshments are included and a raffle is usually held at the end of the talk.

The September meeting includes our AGM and forms the start of our membership year.

Current annual membership fees are £13 for individuals and £20 for joint memberships.



Our monthly meetings are held at:

The Clifton Centre
 Ashdene Road
 Bicester
 OX26 2BH

Postal address:

BLHS c/o Sally James
 14 George Street
 Bicester
 OX26 2EG

Committee members:

- Bob Hessian (*Chairman*)
chairman@blhs.org.uk
 01869 350662
- Sally James (*Treasurer*)
 01869 243804
- Sally Dexter (*Minutes Secretary*)
- John Roberts (*Membership Officer*)
- Matthew Hathaway (*Editor*)
editor@blhs.org.uk
- Mark Lewandowski
- Peter Crook

Website: www.blhs.org.uk