



Bicester Historian

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bringing local history to life...



Oxford Botanic Garden

June's talk by Mark Davies

Harvest Festivals

Celebrating the harvest in 1911

Seven-Way Plan for Plums

Just what is Plum Cheese?

From the Editor

Hello, and welcome to the fifth edition of the quarterly *Bicester Historian* magazine. As always, I hope you find plenty in here to interest you.

We have moved the monthly talk write-ups back to the BLHS monthly newsletter, leaving just one left to clear the backlog. So June's talk, *Oxford Botanical Gardens*, has been included here, giving us the theme for this edition, Horticulture and Agriculture.

Being such a rural town, there are no shortage of flower shows, agricultural competitions, garden parties, and articles of horticultural advice to talk about, and harvest season is the perfect time to cover them. I was particularly interested in the report of the Bicester Agricultural and Horticultural Show in 1861, which started out pleasant enough but ended up with a very suspicious incident and a lot of "someone ought to deal with that" bystanders.

I am hopeful that we can produce future editions of this magazine as professionally printed hard copies for those members who would prefer that format, and also to sell to the general public. But it is still a matter of cost and demand, so watch this space for further updates and, in the meantime, please let us know if you like the digital version or would prefer a physical magazine to read.



Matthew Hathaway
Editor



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Bicester Agricultural and Horticultural Show

A Pleasant Day Ended in Disaster

Published in the Bicester Herald 26th July 1861

The first show of flowers, vegetables, and fruits, for this season, took place on Tuesday last, in Mr Hitchman's Bowling Green field, which was again kindly placed at the service of the society for the occasion. The day was favourable, although the morning was not encouraging for out-of-door festivities. The show was far inferior to the one held last year, and the attendance of visitors was also less.

The ground was thrown open to the public at one o'clock. An arch, composed of evergreens and flowers, was erected over the entrance to Bell Lane. At the foot-visitor's entrance to the show field a Union Jack was suspended, and "Success to Horticulture," in large letters. There were some flags and banners on the ground, and at the carriage entrance a Union Jack, an arch of evergreens, etc, and the good subjects "Agriculture and Commerce," in bold characters. The productions were, on the whole, very good, and were confined – with but a few exceptions – to the competitive class. For some of the prizes offered there was no competition.

The Oxford City Rifle Corps band was in attendance, and added to the pleasure of the day. The productions were displayed in a large marquee, which was, in the evening, appropriated to the votaries of Terpsichore.

The dance in the evening was attended by about 150 persons. Matthews' Oxford Quadrilles band was engaged, and played some excellent dance tunes. The festivities did not terminate till an early hour on Wednesday morning. An amusing incident occurred here. Some waggish member of the society spread the alarm inside the dancing booth that "there was a fire outside for he saw the flames." That moment the dance ended, several gentleman went in a hurry to the door, and saw – a fire in an iron grate, lit to boil water for the use of the company, and from which the flames were bursting forth at the sides. But the proverb says "there is many a true word spoken in jest," and so it happened in this case, for very few minutes elapsed before it was said there really was visible an alarming fire!



This proved to be at the Glebe Farm, Fringford. A number of persons forthwith took to the road – the foremost group being the “Civil force.” On the road, near to Fringford Half-way House, we met a horseman at full speed, going for the Bicester engine, urging and encouraging the horse he rode.

He must have started late, however, for the fire was seen at Bicester, and some townsfolk had nearly reached the spot before he set out. On our arrival at about 10:45, nearly 300 people were congregated in front and around the fire, which was composed of three hayricks, two of which are those set fire to on the 6th instant; the other is a new rick, and the whole are situated within ten yards of a barn, which is being erected on the site of that which was burnt by fire on Monday, April 22nd.

The majority of the people present were mere spectators not lending a helping hand, but idly looking on, and remarking on the progress of the flames. Indeed, when some of the neighbouring farmers (including Mr King, of Waterloo) made a move in the right direction, they could induce but few to help them. Ultimately, they succeeded in

subduing the fiercer flames in the new rick, and in saving a small portion of the hay. At eleven o'clock the fire had got such hold of the ricks, and had so thoroughly penetrated them, that it was at once apparent that the engine would be but little, if any, use when it arrived. Which it did about 12 o'clock. It was speedily got to work. A line was formed to the nearest pond, but the reluctance to assist was again evident, and the firemen had frequently to suspend operations from the short supply of water.

We understand that Mr Arthur Waters, of Fringford, and Thomas Watson, of Hethe, were the first who gave the alarm at the farm. They were walking across the field about 9:15, when they saw the fire, and at once alarmed the foreman, Robinson. Watson states that he kicked the door, and called out as loud as he could, but that he was sometime before he could alarm Robinson. Robinson and family had, we understand, gone to bed at 9 o'clock. The damage caused by the fire is estimated at between £100 and £150.

This is the fourth fire on the above farm since April last.

Goble & Son

2 Sheep Street

Written by Matthew Hathaway

Goble & Son fruiterers and florists business was founded by James Goble (1787-1865) in 1834. James was also a seedsman, gardener, and a carrier transporting goods back and forth to Oxford. He served as the parish constable from the 1830s until 1857, when the Oxfordshire Constabulary was formed. After that the policing of the town was overseen by the Oxfordshire Constabulary until it was amalgamated into Thames Valley Police in 1968.





Cockfighting was the most popular sport in England for centuries.

Despite being the parish constable, James is also reputed to have maintained a cock pit, for cock fights, in one of the stables at the back of his premises at 2 Sheep Street. Cockfighting, or “the sod”, had been Britain’s most popular sport for centuries, underpinned by the gambling that fed off it, but it was banned in England in 1849, so presumably he closed the pit then.

After James died the business was passed down to his grandson, William Goble (1837-1912). William had been raised by his grandparents since his mother died in childbirth. He married Mary Bennett in 1861 and they went on to have twelve children: Edward, Emily, Annie, Frederick, Robert, Louise, Sarah, George, Mary, Winifred, Richard and Helen. Some of the male children went on to follow the family trade, setting themselves up as florists and seedsmen around the country, but George was the one who took over the family business itself on the death of his father.

George (1877-1960) was succeeded by his son, Ian, who, in turn, was succeeded by his sons, Andrew and Michael. William, George and Ian were all noted for the large chrysanthemums they grew in abundance in the greenhouses at the rear of the shop.

The business always operated from 2 Sheep Street, and at some point the family also came to own the neighbouring building, 8 Market Square. In the 1970s the two buildings were demolished and replaced with the building we see today. The business continued in the new building until it closed in 1990, then the premises were taken over by the Sue Ryder charity shop. It has had a number of occupants since then, but it is still owned by members of the Goble family.





Field and Farm

Haymaking and Modern Machinery

Published in the Bicester Herald 25th July 1902

The question of cocking hay (remarks Prof. John Wrightson in the "Agricultural Gazette") is naturally attracting some attention at present. Variations in practice are due to differences in climate, and in the material to be manipulated; and it is impossible to include all localities and all kinds of herbage in one general description. The difference between hay-making as carried out in the North and South must strike anyone who has had experience in both districts. In my earlier years I was much impressed with the importance of getting grass off the ground and into cock as soon as possible. To "cure in cock" was the compendious recipe for good hay-making. Lap-cocks, grass-cocks, foot-cocks, pikes, or big cocks containing one single horse load each, were all in use, and the feeling of relief was great when grass could be got up into cocks or pikes, as it was then considered to be comparatively safe. In making meadow-hay the usual course was to mow, ted, turn once or twice, rake into windrow, and break the row into cocks. These cocks were spread into staddles the next morning, and put into cocks of double size to await sweeping or carting. The benefits of this system, which is no doubt still widely followed, consisted in preserving the colour and aroma of the grass, and protecting it from injury either from rain or excessive heat. Although it is proverbial that we should make hay when the sun shines, it is equally true that the best hay weather is not brilliant and

roasting. The most favourable conditions are dry air, tempered from blazing heat by a cloud curtain. Scorched, frizzled-up hay will not sweat in the rick, and comes out light and hollow, whereas well-made hay heats slightly, and consolidates into a firm rick, ten cubic yards of which will weigh one ton.

Since the introduction of machinery into the hay field the manner of dealing with the crop has changed altogether. The writer's grandfather held the opinion that good hay could not be made unless it went through a certain number of processes. It was, of course, mown with a scythe, then it was shaken out (tedded) with a fork, at night it was raked into small swaths, after which it was pulled into windrows, turned several times, then cocked for the next night and finally shaken out, "put on" and carried.

If hay had to be made in this fashion nowadays, farmers would soon get tired of it, and if the grandfathers could return it is doubtful whether they would stick to the old methods for more than one season.

The hand-mowing had its disadvantages to begin with. A gang of men would agree to mow the lot at a certain sum per acre, but when about half through they would get tired of it, and especially if the weather was hot, and the carrying party followed closely on their heels. They would then lay down in the shade or stay away for a day or two, leaving the farmer and his remaining men to await their return to work. If another lot were set on to mow, number one gang claimed to be paid for the whole as the farmer had let

them have the job, and law cases resulting in this way were not infrequent.

Of course, labour was very much cheaper in those days or the hay never would have paid for the trouble of getting it.

Today the mower, swath-turner, kicker, and horse rake do practically all the work, save pitching, in the field, and the elevator saves overhead lifting at the stack, and all the machines can be worked as well by a strong and intelligent lad as by a man who wants a pound a week.

In bright sunshine nothing is simpler than making good hay. Light crops of seeds or meadow grass are simply cut down and allowed to lay for about two days, then pulled into rows with the horse rake, just loosened with a fork, so that it pitches better, then “put in”, usually with a small rake, and carried. Clover must be turned once or twice on the swath. Some people save the rakings and go over the ground again for them, but

seeing that the ground is swept clean by the horse rake, except where the rows are, it is perhaps better to have a drag rake behind each pitcher and clear the whole thing up at one operation. Sweep rakes and hay loaders are capital things on very large farms with big breadths of hay together; but for small or even average sized farms they are hardly suitable.

The other implements mentioned can be utilised by them all, and if they are not purchased they can usually be hired when wanted, and this is quite as well for the small farmer, inasmuch as it saves wear and tear, and the trouble of keeping clean and housing. Although it is well on in July there is as much sap in the hay as there usually is in June, owing to its late growth. Therefore, the raking must not be done too quickly – even though it appears ready – for in such a season it “comes again” in the stack, and then there is danger of overheating.



Parochial Garden Party

Concert and Dance Both as Popular as Ever

Published in the Bicester Herald 28th July 1911

It was the consensus of opinion of those attending the parochial garden party at Bicester last evening that it was the most enjoyable that had ever been held. There are those who dance and those not versed in the Terpsichorean art to cater for, and this year this was successfully accomplished; thanks to the untiring work of Mr Bishop and those who rallied round him in order to obtain a goodly sum for the bell and organ fund. The dry weather of the past few weeks, which continued all day Wednesday and Thursday, brought out a gathering of over five hundred people in Bicester House garden, again kindly lent by Captain and Mrs Fane, whose generosity in this respect is greatly appreciated. The attendance, though below that of the early years of the garden party, was above the average of recent years.

An excellent concert was first given. A stage had been erected under the trees. The opening item was a selection by the orchestra. Then followed a dramatic sketch by Miss James and Mrs Meredith, who took the parts of maidens with the same name. A brown parcel arrived, and then began the question of ownership and also speculations as to the contents of the parcel. The sketch was admirably acted.

The choir boys sang "The Sea Snake," in which the tall yarns of the sailor greatly amused the audience, which was a large one quite early in the evening. The following girls, who had been admirably coached by Mr I.G.P. Durrant, then gave a dance: Doris Mountain, Winnie and Doris

Buckle, Kathleen Bennett, Dorothy Drover, M. Tompkins, Grace Rogers, and Doris Pankhurst. Mr E.A. Clifton sang "Old Farmer John," and Mr H. Stanley gave a nice rendering of the solo "England," from the "King of Sherwood," and was assisted in the chorus by the remainder of the cast, who then followed with the chorus "If You Will Come to Tea."

A most delightful item was the duet "You Mustn't," by Miss Kathleen Bennett and Master Charles Drover, the young artistes being very heartily applauded at the close. The choir men next gave "A Lullaby Up-to-Date," dealing with a suffragette and her baby, and this was a good item. The choir boys gave, in excellent tone, "The Shark," and the "Sherwood cast" was loudly applauded for the rendering of a selection taken from a comic opera. This was succeeded by a charming dance by the girls; and a duet "Great Scott," by Messrs E.G. Colby and D. Harris, proved most amusing.

The entertainment concluded with the farce "The New Servant," by Mrs Meredith and Miss James, and this greatly interested the company.

The following was the full programme:
Dramatic sketch – A Brown Paper Parcel – Miss James as Miss Angelina Browne and Mrs Meredith as Miss Arabella Browne.

Unison song – The Sea Snakes – Choir boys.

Dance – Greensleeves – Girls.

Song – Old Farmer John – Mr E.A. Clifton.

Solo and chorus – England – Mr H. Stanley.

Chorus – If You Will Come to Tea – "The King of Sherwood" cast.

Duet – You Mustn't – Miss Kathleen Bennett and Master Charles Drover.

Part song – Lullaby Up-to-Date – Choir men.

Song – The Shark – Choir boys.
Chorus – King of Sherwood - Full cast.
Dance – Chelsea Reach – Girls.
Duet – Great Scott – Messrs E.G. Colby and David Harris.
Farce – The New Servant – Miss James as Mrs Jack Ronaldson (a very young and inexperienced housewife) and Mrs Meredith as Kitty Smart (her friend, otherwise the new servant).

Meanwhile the illuminating, which, though not over elaborate, was most picturesque, was carried out. Messrs R. Wilkins and Co, of Oxford, were again responsible for the decorations and illuminations.

There was but a very brief interval between the concert and the dance. A programme of twelve dances was enjoyed by hundreds on the excellent turf. The orchestra gave their services free of charge, and their playing gave great satisfaction. The orchestra was composed of the following: Piano, Mr W.H. Grimsley, ARCO; violin, Mr F.A. Harrison; cello, Mr G. Bishop, ARCO; flute,

Mr J. Ryman. Members of the committee acted as M.C.'s.

The following was the dance music:

Waltz – Quaker Girl.
Waltz – Passing Thoughts.
Polka – Garden Party.
Lancers – Merry England.
Waltz – Louisiana Lou.
Barn Dance – Leslie's Barn Dance.
Lancers – British Fleet.
Two Step – Auto-car.
Waltz – Passing Thoughts.
Lancers – Merry England.
Waltz – O Maris Stella.

The refreshment buffet was in the charge of Mrs R. Smith, who was assisted by Mrs E. Smith, Miss Hawkins, Mrs Scarsbrook, Mr R. Smith, and Mrs Wesker.

At 11 o'clock the band played "God Save the King," and this brought to a conclusion a most delightful time in a veritable fairy land.

The lawn and terrace of Bicester House, where many charitable events were held over the years.



Oxfordshire Gardens and District Nursing

Local Gardens on View for Nursing Funds

Published in the Bicester Advertiser 30th July 1937

The gardens of the various country residences in the district are being thrown open to the public again this summer on specified days to assist the funds of the district nursing. A fee of one shilling a head will be charged for admission, except in a few cases where it is less. Where the house is on view an extra charge will be made to see it.

The gardens will be open from 2pm to 7pm on Sundays, and 11am to 7pm on weekdays, unless otherwise stated. AA Patrols will help to direct motorists to the gardens.

Shelswell Park





July:

11th - Shelswell Park; Mrs E. Slater-Harrison.

31st - Epwell Mill; Mr P. Withers; Epwell, 7 miles west of Banbury; 17th century watermill; herbaceous border and stream; 2-7pm.

August:

1st - Epwell Mill; Mr P. Withers; Epwell, 7 miles west of Banbury; 17th century watermill; herbaceous border and stream; 2-7pm.

1st and 2nd - Shipton Court; Captain D'Arcy Hall, MP; Shipton; yew hedges.

7th and 8th - Burford Priory; Commander and Mrs A.R.T. Southby; Shipton Station; buses to Burford.

11th - Watlington Park; Viscount Esher; Watlington.

11th - Adwell House, Lewknor; Captain H. Birch Reynardson; Oxford - Wycombe bus.





Headington Hill Hall

12th – Headington Hill Hall; Mrs Morrell, OBE; Oxford; fine views of Oxford.

15th – Hailey, Ipsden; Mr G. Williams; Wallingford Station, 3 1/2 miles; auratum lilies.

15th – Fritwell Manor; Mr P. Crossman; Oxford – Fritwell bus; Jacobean house; yew hedges, herbaceous border; 2–7pm.

15th - Barton Abbey; Major P. Fleming; Heyford Station - Oxford to Banbury bus; herbaceous border; 2-7pm.

21st and 22nd - Epwell Mill; Mr P. Whithers; Epwell, 7 miles from Banbury; 17th century watermill, herbaceous border and stream; 2-7pm.



Fritwell Manor

Shipton Court



September:

5th and 9th - Bucknell Manor; Mrs A. Babington; Bicester; herbaceous border and dahlias.
19th - Checkendon Court; Mrs Rothbarth; Reading.

Fritwell Manor



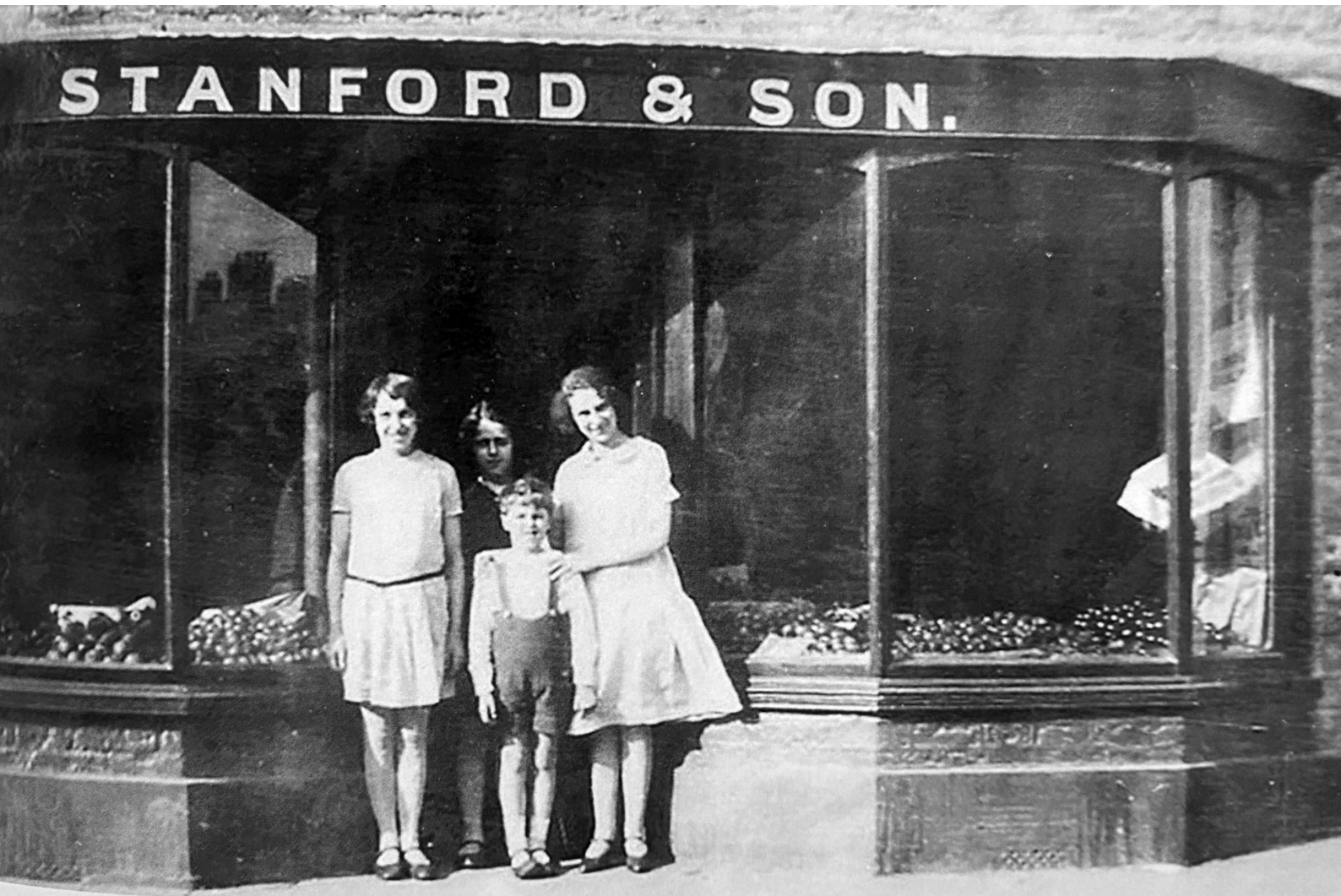
Stanford & Son

17 Sheep Street

Written by Matthew Hathaway

Stanford & Son greengrocers business started out in Market Square in the 1860s when Thomas Stanford (1831-1898) opened a corn and hay dealers at 20 Market Square, next to the Cross Keys public house. When Thomas died in 1898 his widow converted the business into a greengrocers. Then, when their son Thomas took over in 1903, he relocated the business to 17 Sheep Street. The premises in Market Square later went on to become Proctors florists and is now the home of Signature Flowers.

The shopfront of 17 Sheep Street in 1928, with four of Thomas' children standing in the doorway (Dorothy, Marjorie, Cecil and Barbara)





After the business moved to Sheep Street Thomas continued to develop it until he became one of the two main greengrocers in the town. One of the most lucrative aspects of the business was its trade in blackberries. In the 1920s-40s people would go out collecting them from the hedgerows around Bicester and the local villages and then bring them to Thomas, who would buy them for 2d or 3d per pound. He would then box them up and ship them off, via Bicester North Station, to Covent Garden market in London. Thomas became one of the largest suppliers of blackberries to the market, selling them on to over 23 different traders. This earned him the title of 'The Blackberry King of Covent Garden'. His main buyer was J. Lyons & Co., who used them to supply their tea rooms with jams and tarts. They always settled their account with a large cheque at the end of each year and Thomas invested most of the proceeds in various properties around Bicester.



The business continued to operate from 17 Sheep Street until Thomas' death in 1968. After that the business ended and the property was sold and demolished in 1970 to make way for Foster Brothers' clothing shop. The front façade of the new building was kept almost identical to the original, and the date stone of the original building was reused. So where it says 1812, it should actually be 1970.

17 Sheep Street as it looks today, complete with "false" datestone!





The covered part of Covent Garden Fruit Market in 1925.



Flower Show Day at Bicester National Schools

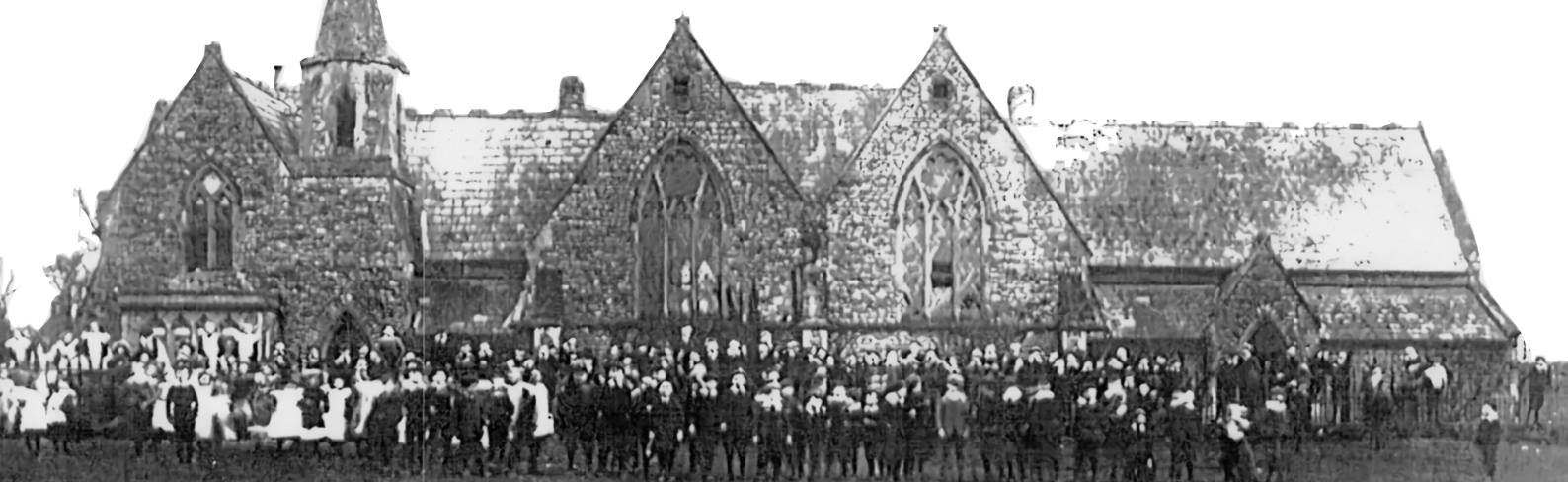
Published in the Bicester Herald 1st August 1902

The annual exhibition of flowers grown by boys attending the National Schools was held on Wednesday afternoon. The entry was small, but the productions were exceedingly good. Those present at the prize-giving were: the chairman of the school managers (Rev. G.P. Crawford), the Hon. Mrs Crawford, Mr and Mrs J.W. Hunt, the Misses Hunt (2), and Miss Piggott; in addition to the school staff, of which Mr W.H. Piggott is the head.

Mr Piggott welcomed the visitors to the little show, and in explaining the origin of it – the third anniversary was now being held – said it was entirely through the kindness of Messrs Toogood, of Southampton, who gave a bronze medal and two certificates, that the small show was started amongst the boys. It was started for the purpose of encouraging amongst them – he always included himself and his teachers with the school – the love of things in nature around them, especially the growing of flowers. This year the school had an allotment garden, which was one of nine provided by the County Council, with the sanction of the

managers and of the inspector. The gardens were for experimental purposes. The Bicester boys visited their allotment twice a week. They had in it about 30 different kinds of vegetables, and of some sorts they had four varieties. He had to keep a record of when the things were sown, when reaped, and so on, so that at the end of the year they might know exactly which produced the best results, and thus let their neighbours know which variety was the best to cultivate.

One little encouragement they had received was that an old allotment holder had said their's was the best crop of lettuces he had ever seen grown in the allotments. This was very good for their first year. The County Council gave a silver cup for the best of the allotment gardens held under their scheme, and their inspector came round in June, July, and August. He had been once over the Bicester plot, which, he said, was extremely good, and he (the speaker) believed that none of the eight other plot holders were more than half a point higher for the way they had done their ground. The



judge would come again next Tuesday and then in September there would be a show in Oxford of some of the vegetables grown upon the plots. The school having the greatest number of points would hold the silver cup for the following 12 months. They hoped that some year this cup would come to Bicester. They could not expect it the first year, as some schools had been on for six or seven seasons.

One result of the allotment at Bicester had been that one lad had turned the backyard of his house into a flower garden. He was quite sure that that backyard was made pleasanter than it was before. Such things as this gave them more enthusiasm, more delight, and more encouragement in the work.

The four tables of flowers before the visitors had been brought by four boys; he would like to see 50 exhibitors instead of four. There would have been more, but the dry, hot weather had parched up the flowers. The question would have to be considered whether it would not be advisable to hold the show earlier another year.

The Rev. G.P. Crawford said he was sure that the exhibits were the result of long and continuous work. All that they were doing in the gardens had the warm sympathy of the managers. God in His providence had placed them in the country, but a large number of people were continually going to the towns. At the end of ten years from 1891 Bicester was 300 less in its population. They had left the country and gone to some of the large towns. There were towns in the country and district growing very rapidly, such as Oxford, High Wycombe, and Aylesbury. Villages were decreasing in their population. No doubt to a great extent people left for the towns because they could make money. He did not wonder at this, as they were all anxious to make the best of their opportunities and to rise as high as they could in the world.

Their lot, perhaps, was to remain in the country, and they should be contented with their lot. He did not say there were no beauties in the towns, but he was sure they were in the country. He liked to see people take an interest in the things which were around them. He came from one of the prettiest parts of the country – North Sussex – And the flatness and plainness of the Bicester country did strike him at first. However, he made the best of his surroundings, and he wished all the boys to do the same and not to grumble. They should find all the good things they could in life. There were more beautiful things in country life than in town life.

He was glad to see the boys taking an interest in flowers, but they must do so from

an educational point, to be successful. They must know the habits and ways of flowers, they must understand the soil in which to plant, and they must take into consideration the weather, before they became gardeners who would command good wages and high places.

There were other things a country boy could take an interest in. Every country boy ought to be able to shut his eyes, and tell the name of a bird by its song. They should be able to tell one bird's egg from another. Then there were butterflies and moths which offered much interesting study. They ought not to be able to go 200 yards in the country without finding something which should make them happy and wiser when they returned home.

He was glad to hear of the boy who had turned the backyard into a flower garden. There were too many backyards in Bicester which were not gardens. He would like to see some of them anything but what they are at present.

The Vicar then distributed the prizes as follows: First, bronze medal for the school championship for excellence in horticulture, Thomas Mallett; 2nd, certificate, Cyril Durrant; and 3rd, Harold Lane. Mr Piggott said Willie Harrison had shown a collection almost as good as the third, and he promised him a prize.

Mr J.W. Hunt said he was agreeably surprised to see the beautiful flowers, but he was disappointed that there was not a larger number. He was surprised that this cultivation was not taken with more warmth by the boys, and wondered the reason. Perhaps in the majority of cases they had no garden at home, and if they had, their fathers thought it could be put to better use by growing potatoes than flowers. So far he agreed. Potatoes were of more use to a hungry family.

He wondered whether the collection of wildflowers had been tried. Perhaps the Southampton firm, who were "Toogood" in everything, would be "good enough" to give prizes for wildflowers. (Laughter.) When they went into the country they found beautiful flowers strewn everywhere only wanting to be gathered. There was the extremely beautiful wild rose, with lovely perfume; the purple vetch for hanging gracefully over the edges of the bouquet, and very many others from which a collection could be made up, which would be as good, if not surpass, the best hothouse flowers. If they could not get prizes from the direction he had mentioned, he would promise them they should have them from some other.

Mr Piggott then thanked the visitors for their presence, and the proceedings ended.

School Gardens Show

Published in the Bicester Herald 4th August 1911

The annual show for the schools in the Bicester district was held in the Boys School at Bicester on Wednesday. The Vicar opened the show at 2pm, before a large attendance. The show was really excellent for the season. The flowers Coreopsis, Godetia, Sweet Peas, Mignonette, and Sweet Sultan were very good. Herbs, which are often neglected, also formed a feature of the show. The judge was Mr M. King, gardener for Mr H. Tubb, Chesterton Lodge. Middleton Stoney got possible points for onions, Charlton for globe beets, and Fritwell for ideal potatoes.

Mr S. Heaton having called upon the Rev. W. O'Reilly to open the show, the Vicar said it gave him great pleasure to do so, as nothing, he thought, that was brought in the schools did so much good as that which interested the growing generation in gardening and agriculture. The only way to get the people back to the land was to interest them in gardening and agriculture,

and this was being done by these educational classes and shows. He remarked that the quality of the produce, considering the season, was very good, and congratulated Middleton upon having, for the second time, won the shield. He was told that the three top ones were in the same order as last year, and he hoped those who were down would try to do better next year and take Middleton down.

Mr G. Hawkins proposed a vote of thanks to Mr O'Reilly and Mr E.G. Colby, secretary.

Mr Heaton, in supporting, said if the teachers and scholars were not so keen the competition would be really inferior. When the judges, who were practical gardeners, admitted that the boys could, and did, grow and stage better produce than they did, it was very creditable both to pupils and teachers. This was the best exhibition they had had so far and Middleton had done remarkably well.

The vicar briefly replied.

The former school building in Middleton Stoney is now the village hall.



The following are the points awarded for cultivation and show:

School	Cultivation	Show	Total
Middleton Stoney	391	92	483
Charlton-on-Otmoor	378.5	70.5	449
Upper Heyford	353	66.5	419.5
Launton	329.5	58.5	388
Bicester	321.5	57	378.5
Kirtlington	339.5	39	378.5
Tackley	307.5	62	369.5
Fritwell	311.5	55	366.5
Ambrosden	309	42	351
Islip	273	55	328
Wendlebury	229	-	229

The order of the first three schools was the same as last year, but the percentage of points obtained was much higher.

The former school building in Upper Heyford is now a private house.



Markets and Sales

Friday's Poultry and Produce Market

Monday's Cattle and Livestock Market

Published in the Bicester Advertiser 20th August 1937

Increased entries were a welcome feature of the sale on Friday last, and Midland Marts Ltd also report a good attendance and excellent prices.

Live poultry numbered 269, cockerels selling to 3s 8d, hens to 2s 3d and geese to 5s each. In the day-old section, pullets made 3d each. Forty-four head of dead poultry met a steady demand, roasters making 1s 1d, ducklings 10d and broilers 9d per pound.

About 515 dozen eggs met a better trade and advanced in price, reaching 1s 9d a dozen, or 2s 11d a score, with an average of 1s 8d or just over 2s 9d a score. Butter met a good demand to 1s 7d per pound, with an average of 1s 6d. Cream made 2s 6d a pint.

A fair supply of vegetables, fruit and flowers met a ready sale, and several lots of furniture were also disposed of.

Midland Marts Ltd also report a very marked advance in entries to the market on Monday, and with several new buyers also in attendance there seems but little doubt that the day has caught on, and Bicester market will shortly be one of the more important in the county.

Forty-five fat cattle (40 graded) were on offer, and among the graded animals four were super graded and several others well finished were forward. The best cattle met an excellent demand, light-weight heifers selling to 46s. Fat cows sold to £15.

Store trade was quiet and dairy cattle were not as strongly demanded as of late. The good entry of sheep and lambs (numbering 270) sold readily at fully late prices, lambs making to 54s and theaves to 61s. Forty head of pigs were keenly bid for, stores making to 29s 6d, baconers to 97s, and about 14s a score, porkers and middle-weights from 64s 6d to 54s 6d. Fourteen calves sold well, fat calves to £4 7s 6d and rearing calves to £4 2s 6d.



Seven-Way Plan for Plums

Published in the Bicester Advertiser 9th August 1940

The finest crops in our gardens and orchards this month are plums, and they are just as good as they look. There is no need for waste, however heavy the crop, for when the sugar ration is short there are ways of conserving supplies which need no sugar at all. First of all you should use some of the firm, ripe fruit for jam; you are almost sure to have reserved some sugar for this excellent preserve, and you will have your extra 'sugar for plums' ration during the week beginning on Monday. Do not waste precious sugar on overripe fruit though. It is false economy, for the jam will not set so well nor have so good a flavour.

You can use less than the usual amount of sugar if you are going to keep the jam for a few months only, or if you take the trouble to sterilise the jam and seal it just as you do bottled fruit. The usual proportion of sugar to fruit in plum jam is 1lb of sugar to 1lb of fruit, but for "quick eating" – say 3 to 4 months – it is possible to use as little as 12oz of sugar to each pound of fruit. Here is a good recipe:

PLUM JAM – 9lbs plums, 4 1/2lbs sugar, 1/2 pint of water. Grease your preserving pan with butter or margarine papers. Cook the fruit in the water very slowly until it is quite tender. Add the sugar, stirring until it is dissolved, then boil rapidly. Remove any stones that rise to the surface. Test for setting point by cooling a little on a plate. If the surface sets and wrinkles when pushed with a finger the jam is ready. Pour into clean, hot jars and seal.

PLUM CHEESE is not too hard on sugar supplies. Put sound, ripe fruit into a stew pan, cover with water and bake in a very cool oven until the plums are tender, then put through a sieve. Add 1/2lb of sugar to each 1lb of pulp, stir continuously on the stove until the sugar is dissolved and the fruit comes away dry from the sides of the pan. Press in small moulds or jars and, when perfectly cold, cover each with

several rounds of tissue paper treated with flour-and-water paste. This cheese will keep for several months if stored in a dry place.

Plums make a good relish for meat when pickled. Plum chutney is delicious with meat or cheese. Pickled plums are not so well-known so here is a recipe for them:

PICKLED PLUMS – 4lbs of plums, 1lb sugar, 1lb sultanas, 1 pint vinegar, 1/4oz whole cloves, 1/2oz allspice, a sprinkle of ground ginger and a sprinkle of cinnamon. Dissolve the sugar in the vinegar, add the spices, tied loosely in a muslin bag, and the prepared fruit. Simmer until the fruit is tender. Pack the drained fruit in jars, boil the vinegar until it is slightly thick and fill each jar with enough hot vinegar to cover the fruit.

Having disposed of all the sugar available you will probably still have plenty of surplus fruit. Bottling can be carried out without sugar. You may use water or, better still, the new preserving tablets which are now sold by some of the larger firms of chemists. The finest and fleshiest of the remaining crop can be dried. The rest can be pulped. Methods of drying, bottling and pulping, all approved by the Ministry of Food, are given in a useful little booklet "Preserves from the Garden" compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture and costing 4d. Your stationer will obtain a copy for you if he has not already one in stock.

So here you have seven ways of disposing of your plum crop. Make use of them all and you will have a useful stock of un-rationed health-giving food for the winter months.



Roll of Honour

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

Lieutenant Conroy Henry Ancil, of Cheterton.

Died: 20th July 1943 Aged: 26 Served in: Royal Navy - HMS Stalker

Gunner Harry Victor Wickson, of Upper Heyford.

Died: 22nd July 1943 Aged: 41 Served in: Royal Artillery

Lieutenant Charles Frederick Ruck-Keene, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 3rd August 1943 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Navy - HMS Dipper

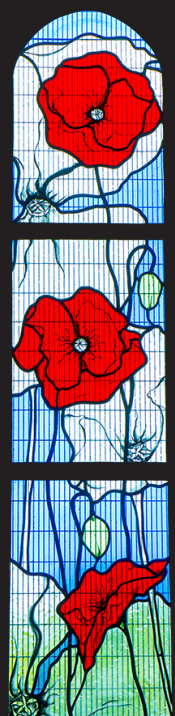
Sergeant Edward Peter Orchard, of Cricklewood, Middlesex.

(Buried in Upper Heyford)

Died: 10th August 1943 Aged: 21 Served in: Royal Air Force

Private Albert Edward Hollis, of Ardley.

Died: 9th September 1943 Aged: 36 Served in: Hampshire Regiment



Oxford Botanic Garden

June's talk by Mark Davies

Written by Mark Lewandowski

The evening's speaker, Mark Davies, began by stating that his interest in local history began when he moved onto a narrow boat on which he lived for nearly thirty years. He explained that the talk would focus on the Botanic Gardens site, the people, and the events that took place there, rather than any botany itself. One can learn a great deal about the plants in the Gardens from anyone working there, but when it comes to the context, people tend to shy away from the subject.

On Sunday 25th July 1621, at 2:00pm to be precise, the Vice-Chancellor, members of colleges and the University, enrobed in their academic finery, processed down the High Street from the Church of St Mary the Virgin to Henry Danvers' plot by the Cherwell, and laid the foundation stone for the oldest botanic garden in Britain. It is also the fourth or fifth oldest in the world, some predecessors being: Pisa, Padua and Bologna in the 1540s, and Leiden in the 1570s. From the founding of the Garden it took twelve years for the structure to be completed.

The instructions given by Henry Danvers, 1st Earl of Danby (1573-1644), for the building of the Garden seem like a tall order. It had to be better than All Souls' College, or Magdalen College tower, or any of the fairest buildings in Oxford both for truth and beauty; in other words, what you build has to be better than anything that is here already. It was created next to the wonderful Magdalen Tower and Magdalen



Mark Davies, our speaker for evening

Henry Danvers, 1st Earl of Danby, who instructed for the building of the Garden



Bridge, on the bank of the River Cherwell.

The University Scavenger was not the sort of lowly job that you might imagine. It was quite an important role concerning public health and safety. Horse dung had to be collected off the streets, and so he was tasked with collecting 4,000 loads of muck and dung and bringing it all to the new gardens. This was used to elevate it that little way from perennial dangers of flooding, which is still to some extent a slight issue. But if you go to the Garden, you will see that it is quite a reasonable height above the water.

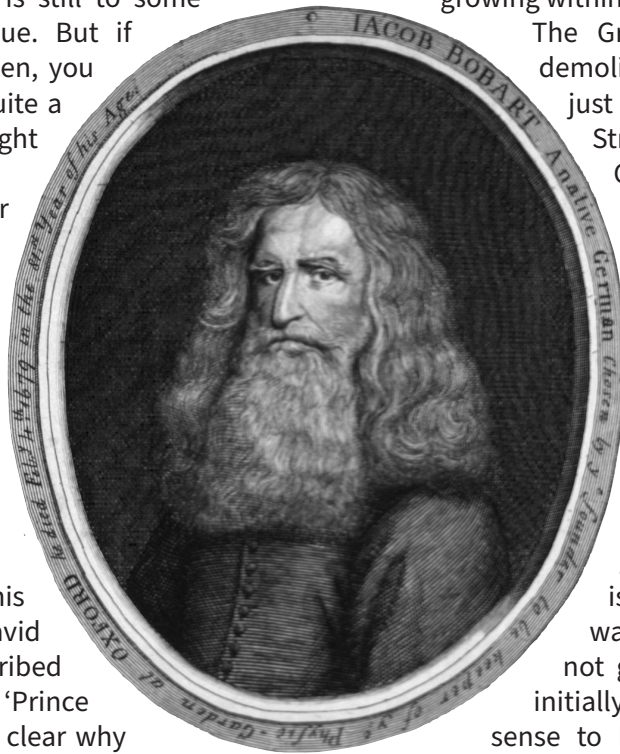
In 1633 the outer structure had been created and the first keeper was appointed. Jacob Bobart (c.1599–1680) the elder, who came from Germany. He was depicted in an engraving towards the end of his life by engraver David Loggan, who inscribed it “to the German ‘Prince of Plants’”. It is not clear why or how he got appointed. He had a military background and he does appear to have been well educated. He was not just a man with horticultural skills; he was educated enough to fit into seventeenth century Oxford society reasonably well. He was appointed in 1641, just as the country

was on the brink of civil war. Oxford became a focus for that for the next four years when Charles I adopted it as his de facto capital. It is not an ideal moment to be starting your career, and it might also explain, to some extent, why it would appear that Bobart did not actually get paid for quite a substantial number of years. He had to look at other means of income, and one of those was to sell some of the produce that he was growing within the Garden.

The Greyhound Inn, now demolished, used to be just along the High Street from Magdalen College and the Botanic Garden. The Bobarts had the lease of this pub from at least 1657. It began with Jacob Bobart and then passed on to his son, and his grandson, and indeed his great grandson. It is possible that this was because he was not getting reliably paid initially, and so it made sense to have an alternative source of income.

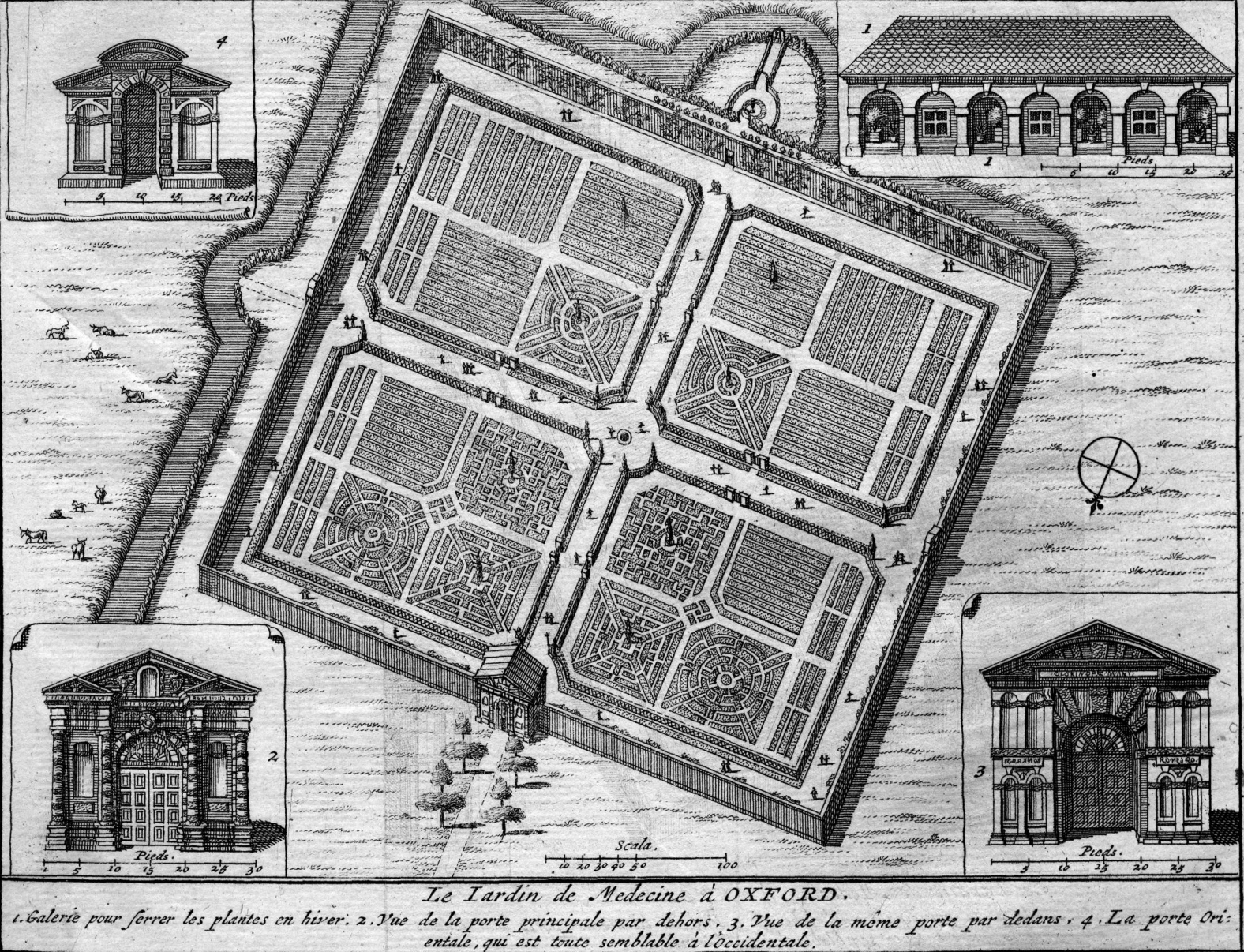
Bobart was a bit of a character, and he was known, on particular feast days, to embellish his very long beard with tinsel and red ribbons and other things, so he looked a little bit, according to one account, like a walking Christmas tree. It just satisfied his own eccentricities, and his own desire to remind people about saints’ days. Another eccentricity was that he apparently kept a goat, rather than a dog. The Danby Gateway was built after his death, partly as an homage to Bobart.

The real driving imperative of the Garden was to grow plants for medicinal use. It was originally known as the Physic Garden because of this, the name Botanic Garden came a lot later. If you go into the Garden, you can still see a few of the plants in the beds that do go all the way back to Bobart’s original medicinal plantings, though nowadays the Garden spreads further south. Topiary was something new in Britain at this time, shaping hedges into different shapes, something that was brought over from Holland where it was a popular way



The Greyhound Inn





An engraving of the early Botanic Garden. Image courtesy of the Oxfordshire History Centre. Reference POX0079338

to embellish different gardens. Bobart used it to bring a bit of continental flair into the Garden, with two of his creations becoming particularly well known. Unfortunately, there are no images of them, but there are three poems specifically dedicated to these shaped yew trees.

Anthony Wood (1632–1695) is a great source of all sorts of 17th century stuff and his diary is just full of interesting little titbits. He was a great collector of different manuscripts and so on, and from these we have a couple of examples of visitors who came to the Garden that Wood accompanied himself. Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), who you will be familiar with from the Ashmolean Museum, visited the Physic Garden with Wood to see Jacob Bobart, an old acquaintance of Mr Ashmole, “...who showed many choice plants, herbs, grafts, and other curiosities to Mr Ashmole’s great

content”.

On one occasion in 1669 it was the Duke of Tuscany who, as Wood says, at the Physic Garden, Bobart, the keeper, “...having presented him with a very fine nosegay in the morning and being there some said Bobart spake a speech in the German tongue to him which he liked at his garden he gave him a reward”. But if we go to the duke’s own account of his travels, published much later; he says “...from the smallness of its size the irregularity and bad cultivation the garden scarcely deserved to be seen”. However, he was impressed by Bobart himself.

Bobart’s son, Jacob, did not succeed immediately when his father died, Robert Morison (1620–1683) first took over for a couple of years. The younger Jacob (1641–1719) was much more studious and much better educated than his father, he understood Latin much better. His father

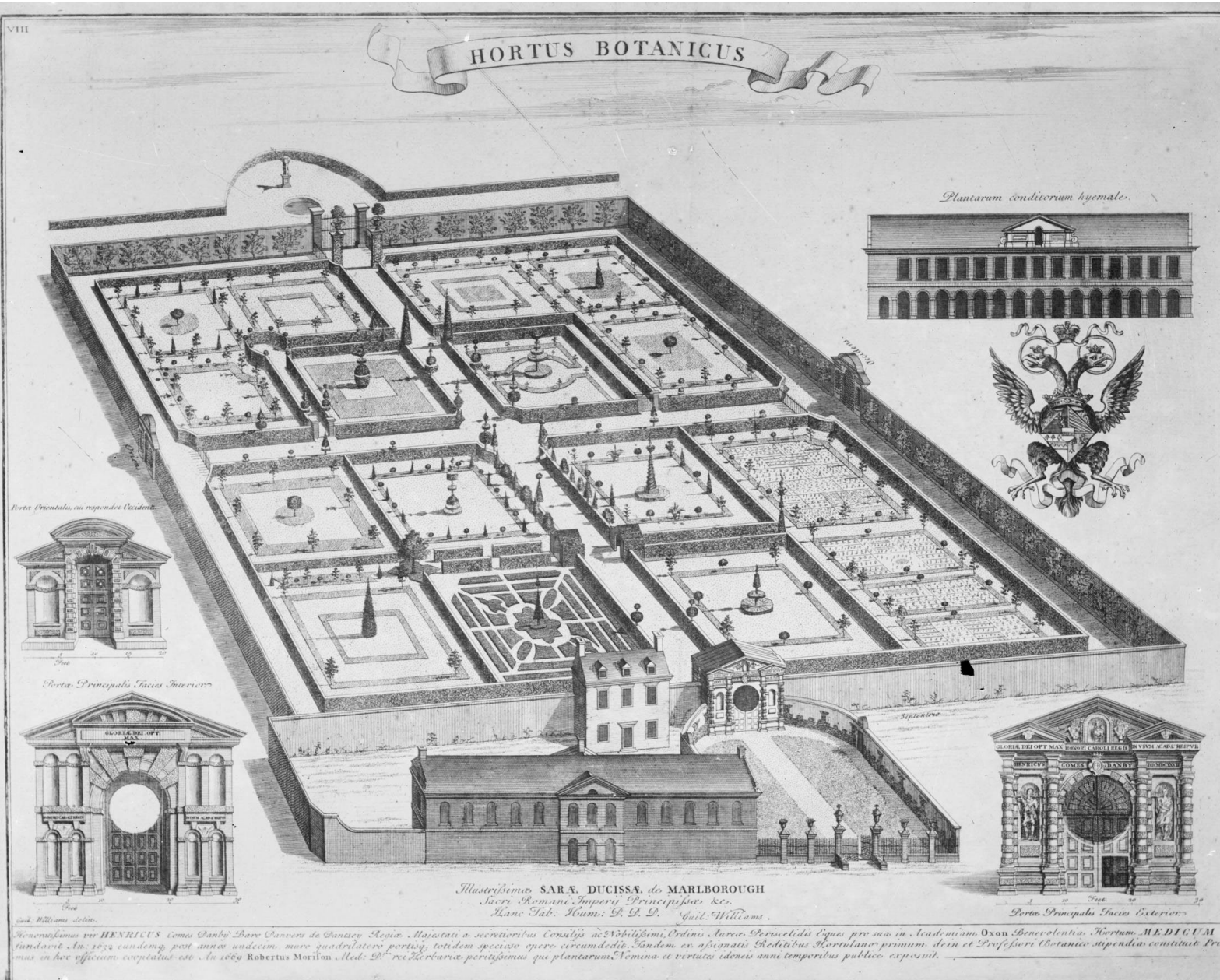
was more of an instinctive kind of gardener, Jacob was a bit more scientific and took quite a lot of trouble in cataloguing the different plants. But, Thomas Baskerville, in his very interesting accounting of over 30 years of Oxford history, was unimpressed by his physical attributes. "As to the fabric of the body [Jacob senior] was by nature very well built (his son in respect of him but a shrimp)". He was not the only one that was a bit scathing about poor Jacob junior's appearance. A German was greatly shocked by the "...hideous features and generally villainous appearance of this good and honest man, his wife is a filthy old hag, and she may be the ugliest of her sex, he is

certainly the more repulsive of the two."

Jacob junior, like his father, had a little bit of a sense of humour. One day he discovered a dead rat and he contrived to stuff it and put sticks in it, so that it resembled a tiny dragon. He convinced a lot of the great scientific minds of Oxford that this was indeed a tiny dragon that he had discovered. They apparently fell for it.

Jacob senior's other son, Tilleman Bobart (born c.1680) went into the same sort of family business, but not in Oxford. He went to Blenheim where he was employed as the clerk of works, more than as the head gardener, initially, when Blenheim was being built. He was there over this period of about

A later engraving by David Loggan showing how the early Garden developed. Image courtesy of the Oxfordshire History Centre. Reference POX0093703



11 years, but progress was so slow that the Duchess of Marlborough, even in 1712, was describing the whole place as simply a pile of stones, compared to how eventually it appeared. Because progress was slow, the building had to take precedence, the grounds were secondary. According to a contemporary account, Tilleman had little or nothing to do and occupied his time by showing people round the place, and fishing for trout and chub in the lake. After this he possibly had a hand in the redesign of Hampton Court, but he definitely did do Wroxton Abbey, which is not too far away from Blenheim, near Banbury.

The great grandson of the original Jacob, and grandson of Tilleman, who remained in the Woodstock area became mayor of Woodstock, the place of his birth, in the following years: 1762, 1766, 1769, 1772, 1775, 1778 and 1782. He attended the first meeting of the Oxford Canal Company at The Three Tuns in Banbury on 14th May 1769. Tradespeople of Oxfordshire and elsewhere who had enough money, invested in this project and he was one of them. It is also interesting that he was the proxy for one of the very few women who invested £100 at that time.

Six years before the Oxford Canal was completed in 1790, James Sadler (1753-1828) became the first Englishman to build a balloon and fly it. He was a pastry cook and it is really fascinating to consider how he managed to acquire the skills to build one of these completely new inventions. There was one advance in Sadler's balloon over its French predecessor. That one had relied on hot air to rise, but Sadler's used the lifting properties of hydrogen instead. The ascent probably took off from the Botanic Garden. Unfortunately, we do not know for certain, because although there is a long account in Jackson's Oxford Journal of the 7th February 1784, which reported that: "Mr Sadler, of this City, has now completed his Air-Balloon and will exhibit the Machine on Monday next; which will be suspended on a different Principle from any yet attempted in this Kingdom; The Curious, and those who would wish to see the grand Experiment, may now have the Opportunity of inspecting the Process made Use of in filling the Machine. It is of very considerable Magnitude, and contains upwards of 4,000 Gallons, which Mr Sadler will engage to set afloat in half an Hour; and he intends to launch it from Dr Sibthorp's in St Clements, precisely at half



past One o'Clock, if the Weather permits.", it annoyingly does not say exactly where it left from. However, all the evidence would suggest that it had to have been from the Botanic Garden.

Humphry Waldo Sibthorp (1713-1797), Humphrey Sibthorp (1744-1815) and John Sibthorp (1758-1796), father and two sons, all botanists, the first and the last being successive Sherardian Professors of Botany. As professors of botany at Oxford, they therefore had a right to have a home within the Botanic Garden if they wanted it. They did not. Humphrey built his own three storey house on the banks of the Cherwell, now part of St Hilda's College. Amongst the documents at the Oxfordshire History Centre is an "extract or copy of Oxford Paving Commissioners orders agreeing to convey lands containing 2 roods 13 perches and 1 rood 30 perches approximately on the south side of Magdalen Bridge to Dr Sibthorp of



the University of Oxford”, dated 18th June 1790, possibly the land for the house. This is where Sadler would have launched that initial experimental balloon and it can be no coincidence that they clearly took a shine to James Sadler and took him under their wing, particularly John, the son of Humphry.

An experimental launch, with live animals, in May 1784 was from the Botanic Garden, the next in October is the one where we do not know exactly where it launched, the next one definitely was from the Botanic Garden, so it is reasonable to assume that they all were.

Tilleman Hodgkinson Bobart (1770-1838), a highly educated individual, also exhibited the eccentricity that all the family seem to show in some form or another. Because he was highly educated, he could speak fairly fluent Greek and Latin. He became a Beedle to the University later, but he was not really interested in that. He was much more

interested in going off and racing his coaches around the country, especially up and down the streets of London. A bit of a boy racer rather than an academic, who earned the nickname “The Classical Coachman”.

Charles Daubeny (1795-1867) was appointed the fifth Sherardian Professor of Botany in 1834 and together with William Baxtor, appointed Curator of the Garden in 1813, he transformed the appearance of the Garden in the early nineteenth century. It was he who renamed the ‘Oxford Physicke Garden’ as the ‘Oxford Botanic Garden’.

He was one of many people who attended a very important debate, on 30th June 1860, at the newly opened University Museum of Natural History. Although he read a paper “On the final causes of the sexuality in plants, with particular reference to Mr Darwin’s work” at the meeting, the whole focus of the two or three days of lectures and debates was Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882)

newly published book “Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection”. The theory had put Oxford’s academic establishments in a bit of a quandary. Most of the young men were studying for and would be looking for a career in the Church, and Darwin’s ideas were flatly contradicting what a lot of the teaching within Oxford was saying, adhering strongly to the strict word of the Bible.

Daubeny would have been particularly interested because, prior to any knowledge of what Darwin was talking about, he had already taken a fancy to keeping a few apes or monkeys in the Danby gateway. William Tuckwell (1829-1919) records that a little bit later, in 1900, in his ‘Recollections of Oxford’, one night the doors were forced and the monkeys liberated, to be captured the next day wandering dismally on the Iffley Road, or perched on the railings in Rose Lane.



Charles Daubeny (1795-1867)

A view of the Botanic Garden in 1856. Image courtesy of the Oxfordshire History Centre. Reference: POX0307875





One of the earliest known photographs taken in Oxford is this view of the Botanic Garden, take in 1840 by William Henry Fox Talbot



This account of Mark Davies' talk is dedicated to the memory of Beatrice Ellen Vernon, 1905-1995, who so loved this place.

Annual Bicester Show

Agricultural and Horticultural Competitions

Exhibition of Horses

Published in the Bicester Herald 5th September 1902

The success of the annual show of the Bicester Agricultural and Horticultural Association hung in the balance for some hours on Tuesday, as far as the gate-money was concerned, the weather being anything but promising of the right sort. Rain, however, kept off in the afternoon, and a good number were in attendance. Rain in the early morning doubtless caused many absentees from a distance. The gentry of the neighbourhood were present in good numbers, and included: Lord Jersey, Hon. Reginald Villiers, Lord Orkney, Mr J.P. Heywood-Lonsdale, M.F.H., Mr, Mrs, and Misses Tubb, Misses Hoare, Mr and Mrs Chinnery, Colonel A.E. England, Captain and Mrs Fane, Mr and Mrs C. Leveson-Gower, Mr Guy Thompson, Sir George Dashwood, Messrs Dashwood, Mr and Mrs R.D. Thomas, Major Dewar, Mr G.H. Morrell, M.P., and Mrs Morrell, Mr F.E. Withington, Major Green, Miss Green, Hon. F. Parker, Colonel and Mrs Gosling, Dr Benson, Captain and Mrs Butler, Mr F.J. Myers, Mr and Mrs C.J. Stratton, Rev. C.J.N. Page, Rev. T.H. Cookes, Mrs Harrison, Mr and Mrs Cotterell-Dormer, Colonel and Mrs Borrodaile, Mr H.E. Phillips, Mr T. Stacey, Major Sandwith, Mr H. Bull, etc.

The show was again held in the grounds of Bicester House, Mr H.G. Fane placing this very convenient venue at the disposal of the committee. Music was supplied by the Waddesdon Old Prize Band.

The Attendance

The uncertain weather of the morning did not materially affect the attendance, but there was a slight falling off on recent years as the following figures will show:

1894 - £73 17s 6d
1895 - £77 9s 6d
1896 - £44 12s 6d
1897 - £86 2s
1898 - £86 2s 3d
1899 - £75 12s 6d
1900 - £90 16s 6d
1901 - £100 6s 9d
1902 - £87 11s 9d

The Entries

The number of entries, though not coming up to last year, which was a record one, were far above the average. The following is a list for the past eight years:

Year	Agricultural	Open	Amateur	Cottager	Butter	Honey	Poultry	Horse	Total
1893	54	90	205	245	9	-	128	186	917
1896	26	88	255	237	3	14	154	119	896
1897	77	56	203	217	7	12	172	143	887
1898	35	54	212	197	4	15	136	152	805
1899	43	56	232	199	4	17	118	161	830
1900	68	70	266	212	7	17	128	184	952
1901	55	95	273	205	6	22	175	232	1063
1902	55	76	239	204	5	6	153	222	960

The exhibits were divided into five tents as usual. There was not very much rivalry in the first class. Mr Tubb's was the only competitive group, but collections not for competition were sent by the Earl of Jersey and Mr T.C. Hoare, and there was therefore no unused space in the large tent. The second tent for amateurs' and the third for cottagers' exhibits were well filled; dead poultry, eggs, honey, etc., were shown in the fourth, and the fifth was for live poultry. Various trade firms had pitched their tents in the show ground.

The Exhibits

With a good season for roots, better specimens were expected. Nevertheless mangolds were good, but swedes were only fair.

The large tent for exhibits in the first class, which is devoted to gentlemen and professional men, presented a pleasing appearance. The first for specimen plant was secured by Mr Foster-Melliar with a beautiful *adiantum farleyense*; Mr H. Tubb was second with a good *maranda zebrina*, and the third was a *coleus*, shown by Mr T. Anstiss. The premier place for stove or greenhouse plant went to Mr Tubb with a nice piece of *allamanda*. Mr Tubb likewise took a well-earned prize – his was the only entry – for the group arranged for effect, the chief material in which were palms, dracaens, lilliums, colladiums, a piece of orchid, very nice gloximas, crotons, ixoras, etc.

Ferns, too, went to Mr Tubb, the best of the collection being a piece of *neprolepis*; and Mr J. Swain (with Mr Foster-Melliar) was awarded

second for a good collection. The Earl of Effingham, for roses, was far ahead of the other exhibits, both for number of varieties, and for excellence. For cactus dahlias, which are not doing well this year, Mr T. Anstiss showed a very good lot in the six variety class, and he also took second in the class for 12 different kinds, Mr W.H. Piggott here beating him.

Mr Tubb was an easy first in the class for 18 bunches of cut flowers in a good class. Asters sent by the Earl of Effingham, and which were awarded first, were good for the season. Mr Goble was second, and his entry for hand bouquet – a light and artistic collection – was given first.

The chief card for white and black grapes went to Mr Tubb, the other exhibits not being ripe. In peaches Colonel Gosling lost to the Earl of Effingham in size, but the former's were the best quality. There were only two entries for pears. The Earl of Effingham came out first for a nice collection of fruit, which comprised peaches,

figs, grapes, plums, melon, and apricots. The second was also a good lot. There was only one dish of tomatoes, for which the season has not been favourable, and in cucumbers there were but two exhibits.

The appearance of the tent for division one productions was set off by two groups of plants sent, not for competition, by the Earl of Jersey and Mr C.T. Hoare. The former contained beautiful specimens of crotons, calladiums, begonias, gloxinias, asclepiis, tuberoses, ferns, etc., and Mr Hoare's, which was arranged in semi-circular fashion at the further end, possessed several plants of the highest merit.

Mr Mattock, of Oxford, and Mr P.J. Perry, of Banbury, exhibited excellent products from their nurseries, the latter having two stands, one for herbaceous flowers and the other for shower bouquets, floral harps, etc., which were very tastefully arranged.

The amateurs' section possessed many noteworthy exhibits. Celery was as good as is oftentimes found much later in the year. Potatoes were an all round good lot, although many dishes were much too large and uneven to be economical "cookers." Mr Bowden, who now shows with the amateurs, held his own as he did in the cottagers' tent.

Carrots were of good quality, but a prize-taker in the class for intermediates was decidedly "long." Turnips were fair; onions good. Runner beans were a grand lot. Mr Bowden's were of good length and not old. Peas and parsnips were decidedly good. The collections of vegetables for special prizes by Messrs Sutton and Messrs Webb and for the society's prizes formed a useful lot. Mr Wadham secured the first offered by both the above seedsmen. Plums (judged according to size) were not so large as in some previous years. There were some good dishes of culinary apples, but the dessert ran rather small. Peaches were a nice collection. The prize-taking grapes were an uneven lot.

The cottagers had a good show, but the exhibits did not fill the tent so much as during the last few years. Both kinds of celery were excellent, but the carrots were not so good as

we have seen at previous shows, though this is probably accounted for by the bad season for carrots. Onions were very good for the season, and special mention might be made of the peas. Parsnips, on the whole, were rather poor. However, the potatoes and collection of vegetables were the features of the tent, the former being almost equal to those shown by the amateurs. Fruit was also a good show.

The table poultry was perhaps the best ever staged at Bicester. The first prize birds of Mr C.T. Hoare were an exceptionally good pair; and the second were also good. In all there were 14 entries, and it was suggested that the class might, with advantage, be made into two – pullets and cockerels. Butter was short in quantity, but good in quality, and here again Mr Hoare carried off premier award. Honey was good, although entries by cottagers were few. Eggs were more numerous than usual, and formed a good display in the two classes.

Poultry entries were less than last year, but the standard was in no way lowered. The bantams stood out as a great improvement on previous shows for some years past, and English and old English game were also a better lot. The heavier breeds were again in Mr R. Holland's name, and he had many noted prize-winners penned. There were several good individual birds, and the special for the best in the show went to an Indian game hen, shown by Mr F.G. Taylor, of Charlbury.

Judges and Stewards

The following were the judges and stewards of the various departments:

Horticultural department Open class: Judge, Mr J. Mattock; stewards, Messrs J.W. Hunt, W.H. Piggott, and E.A. Palmer. Amateurs and cottagers: Judges, Messrs H. King, C. Ashmore, A. Harrison, T. Trollope, R. Warren, F. Blunt, and Parker; stewards, Messrs J. Campin, W. Tompkins, R.H. Liddington, T. Grimsley, C.H. Grimsley, and T. Sare.

Specimen roots: Judges, Messrs J.W. Page, G. Auger, and W.S. Barrett; stewards, Messrs P.C. Holiday, R. Watts, and T. Gibbard.

Butter, table fowls, eggs, and honey: Judge, Mr G.D. Meadows; stewards, Messrs W. Finch, A.E. Hepworth, and W.H. Jones.

Poultry: Judge, Mr J Allin; stewards, the whole poultry committee.

Stewards of show ground: Messrs J.W. Page, T. Gibbard, T. Horwood, J.L. Castleman, W. Deeley, J. Cave, F.D. Holiday, and R. Watts.

The Horse Show

A very useful a lot of horses were placed on the ground – one ring being devoted to the cart horses, and the second to the hunters and jumping. Over-looking the latter Messrs T. Grimsley and Sons had erected a grandstand, which was well patronised.

The classes for heavier horses contained some animals of great worth. Messrs Flowers, Mr A.C. Rogers, and Mr A.E.S. Hepworth were among the successful owners. In the class for hunter mare and foal Mr J.J. Godwin took both prizes, the foal being by Mark For'ard. He also secured Mr John Barker's prize for foal by the same horse. In the hunter class Mr J.W. King took first for mare gelding foaled in 1900 and

1899, and also the silver medal of the Hunters' Improvement Society.

For hackneys and cobs Mr J.W. King secured first for mare not exceeding 15.1; Mr J.A. Galt for cob not exceeding 14.3, in a good class; Messrs Flowers took off the chief card for mare or gelding foaled in 1898; and for mare or gelding five years old or upwards, up to 14 stone, the premier place fell to Mr H. Bonner. The last named gave way to Messrs Flowers in the five year old or upward class, up to 12.7, whose gelding possessed more bone, and Messrs Flowers took the special for the three classes last named.

The pieces of plate for light-weight and weight-carrying hunters were awarded to Mr J.P. Heywood Lonsdale. The open competition for light-weight hunter went to Mr J. Drage, for a bay of beautiful quality. Mr J.H. Stokes came second, and the reserve was a bay, the property of Mr W.P. Dare, which moved well but was rather light. Mr Drage was second to Mr Stokes in the class for weight-carrying hunter. Master J.H. Lawrence was first in the class for best pony, and the jockey prize went to Master H.C. Dashwood.



The driving and jumping was watched with interest by a large concourse of people. In the former, for mare or gelding not under 14.2, Mr B.S. Huggins secured the red ribbon with a useful mare, and in a similar class, under 14.2, the first was carried off by Mr F. Brazier from 12 entries. Several professional gentlemen and tradesmen residing in Bicester entered in the class for harness mare or gelding, not under 14 hands, driven in harness, and the first prize was given to Mr H.C. Jagger for an excellent mare for all purposes; Mr T. Coles was second, and Mr E. Flemons reserved.

In the jumping, for which there were four prizes, very little doubt existed as to the best animal. A pony of 13 hands, ridden by a youth, and belonging to Mr B. Simms, jumped by far in the best form, clearing every obstacle in a trained manner. For second place Mr Hill-Wood was run very closely by Mr Wilkes, and Mr C.W. Fletcher was fourth.

The judges for the horse show were as follows: Cart horses, Mr W. Howkins, Hillmorton Grounds, Rugby; and Mr J.B. Stevens, Ogbourne St George, Wilts. Hunters, hacks, etc., Lord Orkney, Wing Lodge, Leighton Buzzard; and Mr John Hill, Marsh Brook House, Church Stretton. Driving, jumping, etc., Mr H.J. Chinnery, Fringford; and Captain Becher, Stow-on-the-Wold.

The stewards for the horse show were as follows: Judges' stewards, Messrs J.J. Godwin, and G. Mansfield; cart horse stewards, Messrs G. Cave, E.F. Tanner, J.O. Scott and A.E.S. Hepworth; blood horse stewards, Messrs R.D. Thomas, T.T. Brown, H. Watts, and H.C. Jagger.

Mr H.G. Lepper, M.R.C.V.S., was the hon. veterinary surgeon.

The Luncheon

The luncheon was provided in a marquee on the ground by Mr J. Dearn, of the King's Head, Bicester. A large company sat down to the excellent repast. Sir George Dashwood, Bart., as this year's president, took the chair, and he was supported by Lord Jersey, Mr G.H. Morrell, M.P., and others. The loyal toast was given from the chair, and was cordially received.

Mr G.H. Morrell said he had been suddenly called upon to propose the next toast, which he hoped might have fallen to his noble friend, the Earl of Jersey. He proposed "The Society, the President, Judges, and Stewards." He was glad to find that their president was an exhibitor. (Applause.) He found he had shown a boy and pony – the boy a capital rider, and the pony a smart one to carry such an interesting

sportsman. On looking round the show that day he thought they could congratulate themselves on the extraordinary roots of the neighbourhood. Mr Morrell then alluded to his visit to Normandy, and explained the agricultural pursuits there, and made some apposite remarks as to the weather affecting the harvest. He had seen butter at shows in Jersey and could say that their butter compared very favourably with it. Our M.P. next spoke as to the tests in Lower Belgium for getting pure butter – butter without margarine. Mr Morrell made a lengthy reference to the nags he saw in South Austria, which were sold at about £9 each, and how they managed to get them for £20 or £25 he did not know. In conclusion, he said he thought those shows, such as Bicester, were a great help to agriculture. He hoped they would have a good holiday that day. He should like to see in the judging of horses that points were given for the land on which the horses were reared. He gave "The Society, the President, the Judges, and Stewards." (Applause.)

The Chairman said he thought he should have been able to get out of giving a speech. He was very much indebted to Mr Morrell for the way he had proposed his health and that of the society. There was one thing that very often struck him at those shows, and that was sometimes the agricultural part of the meeting was rather put in the background. He was very glad to hear that on the present occasion the agricultural horses had come to the front. Referring to the weather, he said it was unfortunate they could not choose it. He expressed a hope that they would see the September sunshine, and be able to get their corn in. Roots, he believed, was a fair show everywhere. He congratulated those present that day for giving them an opportunity to see their nice cheerful faces. He would ask Mr Hill to respond for the judges.

Mr Hill confessed that he was quite unexpectedly called upon. He was of opinion that now the Royal Agricultural Society was going to permanently remain in London, those one-day shows will do more good. He considered the small societies ought to have plenty of classes for the good of the farmers and the small exhibitors. They ought to have the best horses they could, but also have special classes for farmers and breeders themselves. (Applause.)

The Hon. F. Parker, in an amusing speech, proposed the health of the ladies, which was heartily drunk. This concluded the toast list, and the gathering dispersed.

Harvest Festivals

Published in the Bicester Herald 29th September 1911

With the season upon us once again, a number of harvest celebrations have been taking place around the town.

Bicester Workhouse

The little chapel at the Bicester Workhouse looked most beautiful for the harvest festival on Sunday last, thanks to the work of the Master and Matron (Mr and Mrs Parks) and the material which could be obtained from the Workhouse gardens. The stove was surrounded with geraniums, coleus, and ferns, and the font was decorated with anemones. In the windows was a nice display of choice fruit, vegetables, bread, corn, etc. One noticed some branches of raspberries, with fruit which was especially fine considering the time of the year. There were also a number of cakes, which Mrs Palmer sent. These were afterwards distributed amongst the inmates. At the base of the lectern was a nice group of ferns, coleus, etc., and around the harmonium were geraniums, cypress, petunias, coleus, ferns, etc. The altar vases were filled with dahlias, geraniums, and gaillardias, and on either side of the sanctuary were groups of plants.

The service was held at 9:30, when Holy Communion was celebrated by the Rev. T.G. Evans. The hymns were "O Praise Our God Today," "O God, Unseen Yet Ever Near," and "We Plough the Fields, and Scatter." Miss B. Coleman presided at the harmonium.

St Edburg's Church

The harvest festival was held at the Parish Church yesterday, when the following were the services: Holy Communion 7:30, matins 10:00, children's service 4:15, and choral evensong at 7:30.

The decorations reflected great credit upon the artistic conceptions of those who accomplished this work of love. In the centre of the altar table was a large loaf, and the six

vases had been filled with choice flowers, and the spaces between the vases had been filled with fruit, corn, etc. The niches in the reredos had been adorned with fruit and flowers. At the entrance to the chancel were groups of kochias, surrounded with fruit, etc. The pulpit had been completely covered with flowers, including chrysanthemums, Michaelmas daisies, dahlias, marguerites, etc., whilst at the base was a collection of fruit. The font was enveloped in flowers and foliage, and looked very nice. The decorators were as follows: Altar, Mrs O'Reilly and Mrs Hunt; pulpit, Mrs Watts and Miss B. Coleman; font, the Misses Finch; who were all assisted by Mr R. Smith, the verger.

With evensong was associated the eve of the feast of St Michael and All Angels. There was a large congregation, which included the Bicester Company of the Church Lads Brigade, which held a church parade. The service was intoned by the Curate (the Rev. T.G. Evans), and opened with the hymn "The Sower Went Forth Sowing." Tallis' festival responses were used, and the Psalms for the 28th day were chanted. The Vicar (the Rev. Walter O'Reilly) read the first lesson, and the Rev. S. Meredith-Brown (rector of Fringford) read the second lesson. The choir rendered the anthem "Ye Shall Dwell in the Land" (J. Stainer). Before the sermon the hymn "Christ, in Highest Heaven Enthroned." The Rev. S. Meredith-Brown preached from Mark iv 26 and following verses: "And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground," etc. The rev. gentleman spoke on the effect of influence on spiritual growth. Whilst a collection was taken on behalf of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, the hymn "Stars of the Morning, So Gloriously Bright" was sung. During a procession the hymns "To Thee, O Lord, Our Hearts We Raise" and "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" were sung.

The collections amounted to £3 1s 4d, the evening collection realising £2 17s 4d.

Crockwell Mission Room

This mission room was effectively decorated for the harvest festival, which was observed on Sunday last, when there was Holy Communion at 8am, and evensong at 6:30. At the communion service the celebrant was the Rev. Walter O'Reilly (vicar) and there were fifteen communicants. Evensong was conducted by Mr I.G.P. Durrant, and there was a crowded congregation.

The Rev. T.G. Evans (curate) preached from Colossians iii 15: "Be thankful." He referred to the promise God made to Norah that seed time and harvest should not cease, and each year that promise had been fulfilled, and that was the reason they were gathered together that evening, to thank God for the harvest. At those harvest festivals they should take a wider view of them, and should not only thank God for material gifts, but also for spiritual blessings. The petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," had a wide meaning. It was explained in the Catechism as being all things for their souls and their bodies. They must thank God for being their Creator, their Preserver, and for all the means of grace and for the hope of glory, and for His inestimable love in sending His Son to die for them. The preacher next

dealt with the sin of ingratitude. The hymns were "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," "We Plough the Fields, and Scatter," "Praise, O Praise Our God and King," and "The Sower Went Forth Sowing." Miss Long presided at the organ.

The decorators for the festival were Mrs Coggins, Miss Shillingford, and Miss Boddington, who were assisted by Mrs Gostelow.

The offertories were on behalf of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, and amounted to about £1 17s.

Congregational Church

The scheme of decoration for the harvest festival at the Congregational Church was much admired. The bulk of the gifts were displayed on a table in front of the rostrum. There was a slight falling-off in the quantity of vegetables, but fruit was especially good. The gas standards and the pillars had been entwined with greenery.

The services on Sunday last, when the festival was observed, were conducted by the Rev. W.W. Foulston, B.A., B.D., of Aylesbury, who gave most appropriate discourses. In the morning, to a large congregation, he took his text from Romans xi 24: "For if thou

Bicester Congregational Church, Chapel Street



wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.”

In the afternoon a special children's service was held, when Mr Foulston gave an address. A collection was made on behalf of Dr Barnardo's Homes, and amounted to upwards of 14s. The children presented their gifts of fruit, flowers, etc., and the array was very imposing.

In the evening Mr Foulston preached from Proverbs xiv 4: "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox." At this service the choir rendered the anthem "O Lord, How Manifold are Thy Works."

Miss Dorothy George presided at the organ morning and evening, and Mr Sidney Stockley in the afternoon.

On Monday evening, the produce was sold by public auction in the Congregational Schoolroom. Mr P.C. Holiday kindly gave his services, and a vote of thanks was accorded him at the close, on the proposition of the Pastor, seconded by Mr W.J. French. The total proceeds of the sale were £3 9s 2d, which must be considered good when the adverse season is taken into account. The proceeds are divided between the Bicester Nursing Home and the Radcliffe Infirmary.

Bicester Wesleyan Church

Hearty singing, large congregations, and artistic decorations were the features of the harvest festival held in connection with the Bicester Wesleyan Church on Sunday 17th. The offerings of fruit, flowers, and vegetables suffered very little in comparison with other years, the drought not having affected the generosity of the friends of the cause at Bicester.

The service in the morning was conducted by the Rev. T. Dodd, of Buckingham, the superintendent minister, who preached from I Kings xix 13: "And behold there came a voice unto him, and said 'What doest thou here, Elijah?'"

In the afternoon there was a special service for children, who presented their gifts of baskets of fruit, flowers, etc. The children presented them during the singing of the hymn "O Lord of Heaven, and Earth and Sea." Mr Dodd gave an address on the lessons to be learnt from flowers.

At the evening service, when the church was crowded, the Rev. T. Dodd preached

from Leviticus xxvi 3-6. The verses dealt with the blessings God gave to those that kept His commandments. The preacher laid special emphasis on the fact that England had been exceptionally blessed as a nation, and the nation should show its faithfulness to God. They could do this by recognising the claim the Sabbath day had upon them and attending God's house.

On Monday evening some of the produce was sold by dutch auction by Mr A. James and Mr Israel Richardson, and the remainder was disposed of by public auction by Mr P.C. Holiday. At the conclusion of the sale a vote of thanks was passed to Mr Holiday, on the proposition of the Rev. F.T. Buckingham.

The total proceeds of the harvest festival were £9 9s.

Salvation Army

The Bicester Corps of the Salvation Army held its harvest festival on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, the 9th, 10th and 11th. The hall was nicely decorated, and there was a good display of fruit, flowers, vegetables, and livestock.

Open-air meetings were conducted on Saturday by Captain Green.

On Sunday services were held morning, afternoon, and evening. The Stonesfield band assisted at all the services, which were conducted by Brother Godsafe and Captain Green. In the afternoon a musical festival was held in the hall. Mr G.H. Dixon presided, and gave an address from Isaiah v 1-7. He referred to sowing and reaping in the spiritual world. Mr Young, of Bignell, and Mr Dixon accompanied the hymns on the piano and violin respectively, and also gave a duet. Selections were rendered by the Stonesfield band.

At the Sunday night service an interesting item was the presentation of long service badges to Mr W.A. Prentice, of Bicester, and Mr E. Jeacock, of Launton, for twenty-four years each of unbroken service in the Salvation Army as local officers of the Bicester Corps, as treasurer, and sergeant-major respectively. The presentation was made by Brother Godsafe.

The produce, etc., were disposed of by Captain Green on Monday afternoon and evening. The proceeds of the sale amounted to £2, which goes towards the local funds. The officers wish to thank all those who helped to make the harvest festival a success.

Bicester Successes at Buckingham Show

Fine Exhibits in All Classes

But Wet Weather Spoils Attendance

Published in the Bicester Advertiser 17th September 1937

For several years the executive of Buckingham Show have been unfortunate with their fixture through unfavourable weather, and yesterday week their misfortune in this respect continued, for rain fell all day, having an adverse effect upon the attendance and spoiling some of the chief attractions of their 76th annual exhibition. This was the more disheartening seeing that the entries showed a slight increase and that the quality of the exhibits, particularly cattle and sheep, was of exceptionally high standard.

This year's president of the show was Captain P.Y. Atkinson, of Cosgrave, and the secretarial duties were, as usual, efficiently carried out by Mr Gerald Bond.

Bicester competitors more than held their own in the seven hunter classes, and there were some excellent animals on view. As usual, Mrs D. Wilson, of Stratton Audley, was well to the fore,

carrying off premiere honours in two of the classes and securing reserve in another. Her successes were with her mare, Haytime, with foal at foot, and her five-year-old brown gelding Clonakilty Bay. Mr W.H. Bonner, of Bicester, was placed third in the former class, and in the next event, for foal likely to make a hunter, he was a worthy winner, Mrs Wilson being awarded reserve.

In the class for yearling colt, gelding or filly, likely to make a hunter, Mr F.H.D. Courtney, of Oxford Lodge, was placed second, and Mr Bonner was reserve in the two or three-year-old gelding or filly class. The Slade (Hunters) Ltd came in for recognition in the event for mare or gelding born in or before 1932, up to more than 14 stone, in which they secured second place, Mr Bonner securing third; and in a similar class up to from 12 to 13.7 stone The Slade (Hunters) Ltd were reserve to Mrs Wilson's winner.

Captain Atkinson (seen here in his Home Guard days during World War Two) was president of the show for a number of years.



William Henry "Harry" Bonner (seen here on the right in the 1920s) was a dealer in hunting horses and proprietor of the King's Arms Hotel for many years.

The Covent Garden Fruit Stores

43 Market Square

Written by Matthew Hathaway





The property on the Sheep Street side of Hedges Block, 43 Market Square, had a variety of occupants over the years. After the Bister Motor & Cycle Works closed in the 1920s the building was taken over by Arthur Butler and his son, Caleb. They had previously run a shoe shop and a fish shop in Buckingham, but moved to Bicester when the opportunity came up and opened the Covent Garden Fruit Stores.

The business continued there, very successfully, for many years. Despite the occasional mishap caused by the narrowness of the road that passed down the side of the building and into Market Hill, But the most notorious incident, involving an army truck that collided with the corner of the building on 30th August 1962, may have been the final straw for the local council as, barely eight months later, the whole block was demolished to make way for a new road layout that eased the flow of traffic through the town and out towards London.



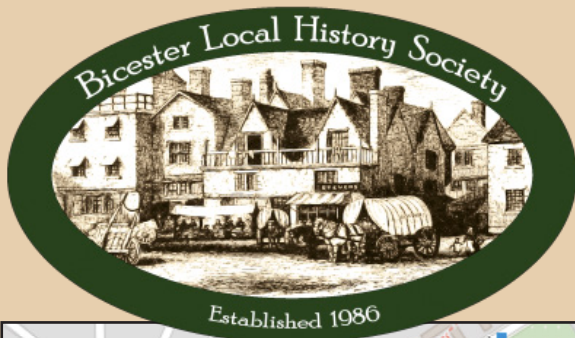
The accident on 30th August 1962 caused considerable damage.

43 Market Square seen from Sheep Street in March 1963, shortly before demolition began.



The big empty space we have today used to be occupied by four buildings that made up Hedges Block.

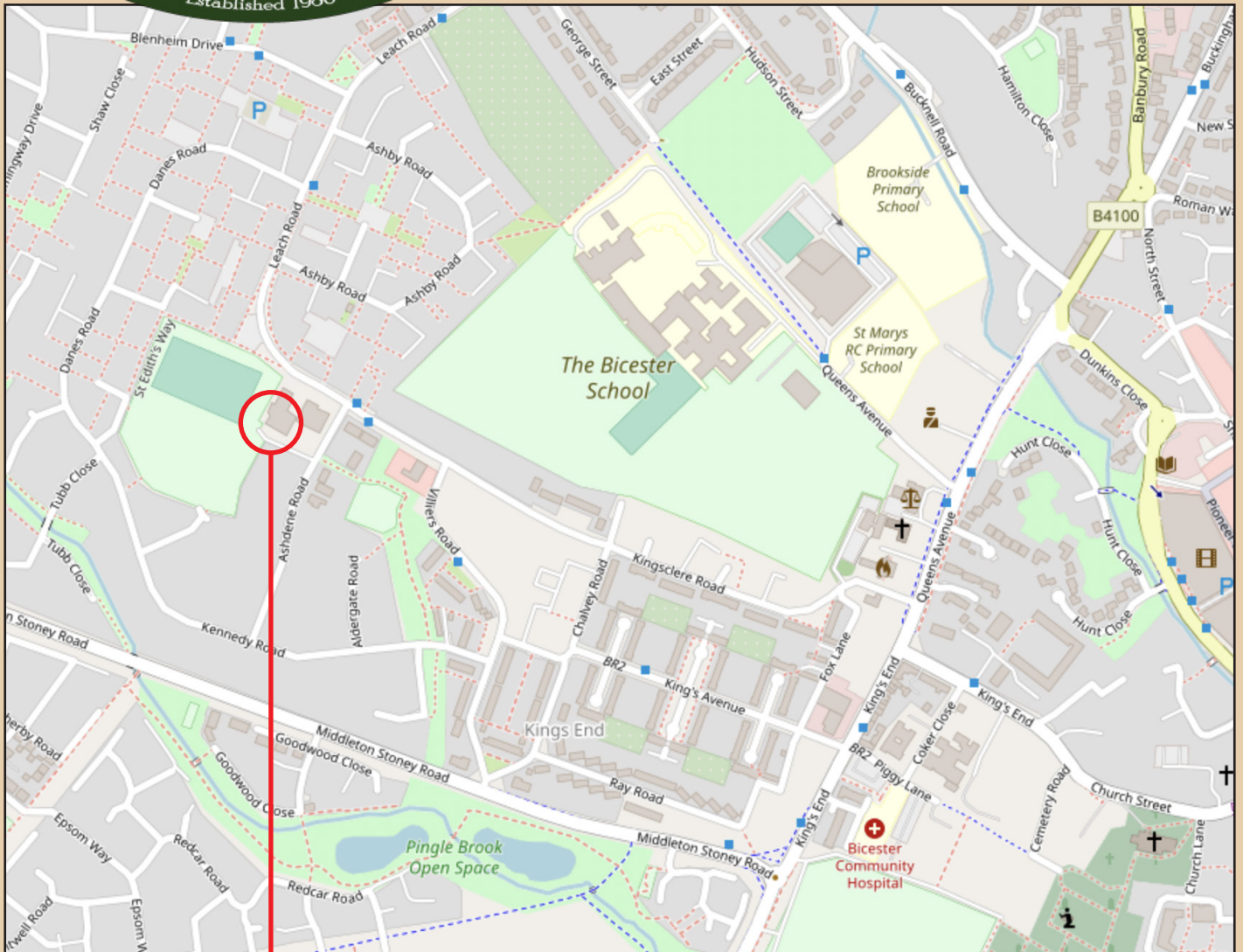




BLHS's monthly meetings are held on the third Monday of every month (except August) and begin at 7:30pm. Members entry is free, visitors pay £3 at the door. Refreshments are included and a raffle is usually held at the end of the talk.

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

Annual membership fees (at time of printing) are £13 for individuals and £20 for joint memberships.



Our monthly meetings are held at:

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