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Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

New Year, New Library



Market Square, showing the library sign outside Pankhurst. - 1934

Whether you like it or not (and I'm referring to the look of the place), the new Civic Centre is taking shape, along with the "add-on" Travelodge on top of the building!

As far as BLHS is concerned the most important part of the building is the first floor, where Bicester's new library will be situated. Having seen the proposed layout for the interior of the library, it is exciting to see an area dedicated to "Local Studies"! This is the area where BLHS will have a major input. Discussions are ongoing as to how it will all work but it will be a marvellous opportunity for the Society to complement the local history material that the Library Service will provide with some of our own material. It won't be a "museum" but a chance to display documents, photographs and other items of local interest. The modern and spacious layout of the new library will give us the opportunity of putting on larger displays, specialised meetings and local history days (or weeks!). It is hoped that the new library will be up and running by the end of April with an official opening in July. We would like to hear from members who would be interested in getting involved in planning displays at the library and contributing towards, what I hope will be, a great relationship between the library and the Society.

The current library was opened by Barbara Cartland in 1966. Prior to that, there had been a county library at Bridge House - the former Shillingford Brewery manager's house which stood where the

Bure goes under the Causeway and is now the beginning of Manorsfield Road. An earlier library had been at the Congregational Church in Chapel Street. Reading Rooms (for "working men") had also been provided by the Earl of Jersey and these were situated next to Wesley Hall in Sheep Street. Private libraries also operated from the properties of Pankhurst and Newby who published the Bicester Advertiser and Bicester Herald respectively. The photograph above clearly shows the "LIBRARY" sign on the premises of Pankhurst.

It remains to be seen as to what will happen when the current library closes. But it looks as though it will be demolished as part of the Old Place Yard redevelopment.

- Bob Hessian

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Dates For Your Diary

Beer, Sausages & Marmalade Talk

18th January - 7:30pm
see page 4

February Newsletter Submissions Deadline

29th January

Volunteer's Evening

8th February - 7:30pm
see page 2

Exploring Your Roots Talk

15th February - 7:30pm
see page 4



The current library in Old Place Yard, under construction. - 1965

Marj's Memories St. Edburg's Church

The church featured more in our lives in the forties and fifties because the population was so much less. The Reverend Cowland Cooper was our vicar and, in those days, the vicar did home visits to



Some of the names in the tower.

the elderly, sick and newcomers to the town.

Bicester Church of England School (St Edburg's, later called Bicester Secondary Modern) always had a church service in the church before classes on a Thursday morning. The vicar would start with, "Good morning my dear children" and we all replied, "Good morning my dear vicar". It was a special service with a printed service sheet and we would listen to a sermon. No-one moved and, if anyone dared to fidget, he would highlight the fact. This way we were forced to listen. He told us that Christianity was "Friendship with Christ" and many other facts that made sense. He was a forceful character and this came over strongly in Confirmation lessons.

Bert Walker was the vergers for many years.

The organist was Mr Roberts, who lived near the church; he was blind and he gave piano lessons in his house. His wife was Marjorie and they had a little boy called John, who is now a member of the Society. I sometimes sat in on my friend's lesson and Mr Roberts didn't mind that.



Mr Roberts, the organist (right)

The organ in the church had to be pumped to force air into it and the man who did this was Harry Grimsley; he was a character, small in stature and the children liked to talk to him and ask him to show his "two thumbs". He had an extra thumb on one of his hands and he didn't mind showing it off.

Children leaving school were given the opportunity to go up the church tower on Ascension Day – hence the names etched in the lead up there.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

Members – we need you!

Bicester Local History Society is run by a dedicated bunch – your committee. We're immensely grateful to those members who help out in a variety of ways, whether it's manning the refreshments or putting out chairs at our meetings, delivering newsletters or spreading the news about our activities.

We suspect that some members may want more involvement in what we do. Is that you? Could you come to a meeting for volunteers at the **Littlebury Hotel on Monday 8th February at 7.30pm?** Refreshments will be provided.

We're looking for members to help with publicity, which includes sending notices to the Bicester Advertiser and updating our Facebook page – we may be a history society, but we're not living in the past when it comes to modern technology!

Or perhaps you'd like to help maintain our archive. Cataloguing/scanning/transcribing – help with any of these tasks would be invaluable.

Avid readers of the Bicester Advertiser step forward! Could you keep a file of newspaper cuttings for our archive?

If admin tasks are not your cup of tea, you may have a research project in mind. We can guide you with the support of the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, so there's no excuse not to get started! We have some research projects too, so why not come along to the volunteers' meeting and join a small team to get the job done?

We always welcome articles for the newsletter. Why not give it a go?

This is just a flavour of our plans. We have many more ideas and would welcome your suggestions too. If you think you can help, please come along on 8 February to hear more and share your ideas.

Please let Sally James know (01869 243804 or sallyjames46@hotmail.com) if you're interested in attending. Many thanks.

- Sally James



Adverts taken from the Bicester Advertiser - July 1958

Bygone Bicester (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

26th January 1866

BICESTER NATIONAL SCHOOLS — The children of these schools gave an evening's entertainment consisting of songs and recitations on Wednesday evening, January 17th, their parents and friends were invited, and a very numerous audience were present.

The following was the programme: Glee "All Among the Barley", Mr. Seabrook and children; recitation "Tis done, Jane", John Alley; recitation "The Queer Old Woman", Ellen Rose; Christmas Carol "Hark, tis the Song of Angels", Mr. Seabrook and children; recitation "The Clever Old Man", Walter Wood; dialogue "Are Nettles Useful?", Louisa Blencowe and Jane Clarke; holiday song "Harvest Time", Mr. Seabrook and boys; recitation "Mary's Pet Lamb", Bessie Aldworth; recitation "Report of a Law Case", George Barker; recitation "Little Kit", Ellen Baker; duet, solo and chorus "Hark to the Merry Bells", Mr. Seabrook and children; recitation "The Milkmaid", Emma Wilson; recitation "Apple Pie", Sarah Ann Smith; solo, duet and chorus "Hard Times", Mr. Seabrook and children; discussion "The Chameleon", John Cheverton, Henry Smith, George Baker and Walter Wood; recitation "Polly", Ellen Elliot; and "God Save the Queen".

The children performed their part, whether in singing or reciting, exceedingly well, and the audience were evidently delighted with the evening's entertainment.

14th January 1916

SOLDIER POET - Private A.A. Butler (Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry) Bicester, "whiling away the time" in the trenches composed the following:

Mud, mud, the grimmest horror of this war.
 No mortal here, laden with his kit,
 and trying thus to do "his little bit",
 with equanimity can never see
 this horrid blot o'er Nature's face.
 Give me a shell that sharply squeals,
 or a sweet grenade that sings
 its story of Paradise and other things.
 But mud makes war no pleasant game,
 and compared with peaceful sport is a trifle tame.

14th January 1966

MAN BLAMES CARS AND HIS WIFE FOR DOWNFALL - "Vehicles and my wife have been the biggest let down in my life" a man told Bicester magistrates on Monday after he pleaded guilty to six offences.

He was David Miller, of 1 Colne Close, Bicester, and he pleaded guilty to stealing an Excise Licence from Webb's Garage, Bicester; fraudulent use of an Excise Licence; using a car without an Excise Licence, without a Test Certificate and without supervision while the holder of a provisional licence; and to driving a car without displaying "L" plates.

Miller was fined a total of £25, ordered to pay £4 17s 6d witnesses' expenses and banned from driving for one year because of an accumulation of endorsements.

Inspector R. Gosling said the case arose from an accident on the Banbury Road, near Swifts House. Police Constables Jones and Washburn attended. The car had turned over and it was empty. P.C. Washburn removed the licence to check the owner and noticed that it had been cleverly fixed. Half of another licence was superimposed on the licence for the car.

When the defendant was seen by the police he was very vague and said he had not been out that night. He said he did not remember taking the car out, but if he did it was because he had a lot of domestic trouble on his mind.

Referring to the theft of the licence the Inspector said the court would have heard from Mr. Hall, of Webb's Garage, where Miller was employed, that he had been to the scene of an accident and towed a vehicle to the garage. Miller stole the licence from this vehicle and used the top half on his own vehicle licence.

Miller, aged 38 years, with a number of previous convictions, said he had no intention of doing this. He apologised to Mr. Hall whom he said had done his best for him — he was an exceptional employer.

The Chairman, Mr. F.T.J. Hudson, told Miller "you have committed an awful lot of offences, some of them you have committed before, but we are taking your circumstances into consideration."

Roll of Honour

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

Private William Hodges, of Middleton Stoney.

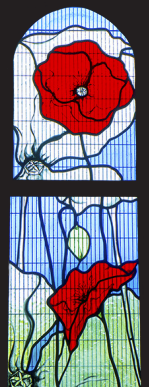
Died: 1st January 1916 Aged: 41 Served in: Army Veterinary Corps

Private Albert Ayris, of Stratton Audley.

Died: 7th January 1916 Aged: 31 Served in: Seaforth Highlanders

Lance Corporal Philip Denys Doyne, of Beckley.

Died: 27th January 1916 Aged: 24 Served in: Royal Irish Rifles



Talks Update

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

Monday 18th January

Liz Woolley tells us about **Beer, Sausages & Marmalade**. Explaining how Oxford became well-known for its 'Celebrated Oxford Sausages' and for Frank Cooper's 'Oxford Marmalade'. Examining the link between food production, tourism and politics.

Monday 15th February

We learn about **Exploring your Roots** with Alan Simpson. Covering the techniques used to research your ancestry. The talk will provide something of interest for people at all levels of ability, as well as a Q&A session to answer your family history queries.

Monday 21st March

Muriel Pilkington explains the history behind **Votes for Women**. From the very early efforts for equality between men and women, through the attempts to get votes for women in the mid and later 19th century, to the First World War.

Village History Cottisford

The village of Cottisford lies about 3 miles south of Brackley. The parish includes the hamlet of Juniper Hill and its northern edge forms part of the northern boundary of the BLHS area as well as part of the county border between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire.

The village stands beside Crowell Brook, which is a stream that passes the villages of Hethe, Fringford and Godington before entering Buckinghamshire, where it becomes part of Padbury Brook, a tributary of the Great Ouse. Cottisford's toponym refers to a former ford across Crowell Brook. In the 13th century the village was called Wolfheysford or Urfesford.

The Domesday Book records that in 1086 Hugh de Grandmesnil was feudal overlord of Cottisford Manor and his son-in-law Roger d'Ivry was the lord of the manor. After d'Ivry's death, his widow Adeline gave Cottisford to the Benedictine Abbey of Bec, in Normandy. Bec Abbey owned Ogbourne Priory in Wiltshire, which administered many of the abbey's English manors, including Cottisford.

In 1404 Henry IV was planning a military campaign in France so he seized Ogbourne Priory and all its manors and granted them jointly to his son, John of Lancaster, the churchman Thomas Langley, and the Prior of Ogbourne, William de Saint Vaast. The Prior died soon afterwards. Then in 1414 Henry V suppressed the priory and by 1422

Thomas Langley had surrendered his share of the rights to the manors to John of Lancaster, whom Henry V had made Duke of Bedford.

The Duke died in 1435 and Henry VI later granted Cottisford to his uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

However, in 1440 Henry VI founded Eton College and the following year he granted Cottisford to the new school. For several centuries the school leased out the manor to successive tenants who were lords of the manor. In 1885 the school sold the manor house and Warren Farm, and in 1921 it sold the remainder of its Cottisford estate.

Richard Eyre, son of the Reverend Richard Eyre, Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral, obtained the lease on the manor in 1739 and renewed it in 1752. He had spent 28 years working for the East India Company and became "a power in the village life". In 1760, the year before Richard died, the school granted the lease to Thomas Bramston and Richard's nephew, Sir James Eyre. Bramston was a barrister at the Middle Temple in London and Sir James was Chief



The parish church of St Mary the Virgin

Justice of the Common Pleas. However Richard's widow, Martha Eyre, remained at the manor house until her death in 1772, and the following year the lease was sold by order of her executors.

The buyer was Reverend John Russell Greenhill, Rector of Fringford and owner of Chequers Court (now the country house retreat of the Prime Minister), who held the lease until his death in 1813. His son Sir Robert Greenhill-Russell, Member of Parliament for Thirsk, inherited the lease but gave it up in 1825.

Manor Farm is a 14th century manor house built of rubble masonry. Surviving 14th century details include two windows and an octagonal chimney stack. Four more windows date from the 15th century. The house has a solar and originally had a mediaeval hall, but in the 16th century an intermediate

floor was inserted to create upstairs rooms. Also in the 16th century a south wing containing a parlour was added. The house was enlarged again in the 19th century. The house is a Grade I listed building.

Cottisford House is a newer manor house, built before 1707. It is of coursed rubble with ashlar quoins and has a hipped roof with attic dormers. William Turner, who leased the house from 1825, had it altered and enlarged in about 1830. In its grounds is a square dovecote.

It has been suggested that parts of the parish church of Saint Mary the Virgin may be Saxon. It has proportions typical of a Saxon church: long and narrow, and it is taller than it is wide. The quoins at all four corners of the building are a puzzle. They are a mixture of long flat slabs and tall narrow blocks, typical of Saxon quoins in many other buildings, but they are not laid in the strict long-and-short alternation common of Saxon work.

All the windows are certainly later work, but in the nave the windows at the west end are high up, in positions similar to where Saxon windows would have been positioned. Low down in the east wall is a blocked arch very roughly made of uneven stones. It is of such rough workmanship that it could be from any period, but if it were Saxon it would be the wall of a porticus.

Cottisford certainly had a parish church by 1081, when Hugh de Grandmesnil gave it, along with its tithe income and a hide of land, to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint

Evroul-sur-Ouche. In 1167 St. Evroul Abbey transferred its property at Cottisford to Bec Abbey, which already owned the manor.

St. Mary's was rebuilt in the 13th century. It is a small building with only a nave, chancel and south porch. The porch is Early English Gothic and has a sundial. The east window of the chancel dates from about 1300. The Gothic Revival architect Charles Buckeridge restored the building in 1861 and the present font was added at the same time. There is no bell tower but there is a belfry in the apex of the roof. The church had two bells in the 16th century. These have not remained but the church now has two bells cast in 1710 and 1858 and a small 17th century sanctus bell.

A watermill was built in about 1230, presumably on Crowell Brook. In 1292 the parish had both the watermill and a windmill. Neither mill's fate is clear, but by the second half of the 18th century the estate seems to have been using a mill at Fringford instead.

An open field system of farming prevailed in the parish until 1854. Attempts by successive lords of the manor to get Parliament to pass an enclosure act for Cottisford's common lands were defeated in 1761, 1777 and 1809. Parliament finally passed an enclosure act for the parish in 1848, but the enclosure award to redistribute the land was not settled until 1854.

The enclosure award included



Flora Thompson

setting aside a plot of land for a village school and in 1856 the school and adjoining schoolmistress' cottage were built with funds provided by Eton College. The parish church ran it as a National School until it closed in 1920. Oxfordshire County Council reopened it as a county school in 1924 and reorganised it as a junior school in 1929. It was still open in 1954 but has since been closed.

The author Flora Thompson (1876–1947) grew up in Juniper Hill and was a pupil at Cottisford School. She wrote the Lark Rise to Candleford trilogy of novels, in which she modelled the village of "Fordlow" on Cottisford.

- Matthew Hathaway

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