



## Vandalism in Church

Parishioners at St Edburg's Church were left shocked and saddened on the morning of Thursday 29th June when they arrived in church to find vandals had deliberately damaged one of the building's oldest Victorian stained glass windows.

The church tower is currently undergoing some restoration work and the vandals appear to have broken into the builder's site compound in the early hours of the morning and made their way up the scaffold. They were possibly hunting for lead on the roof to steal, but the church has no lead-work left so they were out of luck.

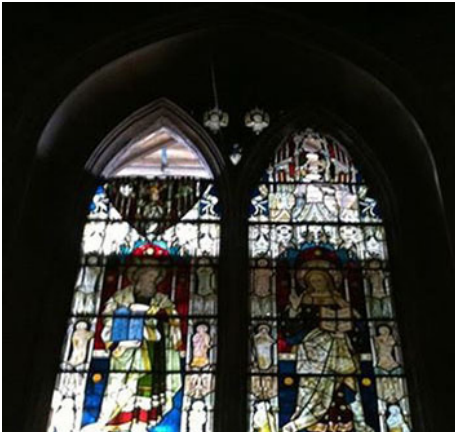
But, whatever their reason for being there, the top section of the window, at the scaffold platform level, proved to be an easy target. They kicked in the window with such force that they managed to buckle the metal mesh protecting the glass on the outside, stove in one of the top panels and completely dislodge the other top panel. Small fragments of glass were left strewn across the church floor.

There is no record of exactly when the window was installed, but the dedication underneath tells us that it was done "In memory of Captain William Style RA of Glenmore and Claggan, County Donegal, Louisa Charlotte, his wife, Frances Isabella Anne Stalbart, their daughter, and the Reverend Charles Marsham", who all died in the late 1860s.

Louisa and Rev. Charles were the niece and nephew of the Honourable Charlotte Coker, who lived at Bicester

House and is buried within the church. During his career Rev. Charles was vicar of both St Peter's in Stoke Lyne and St. Lawrence's in Caversfield.

The window depicts the figures of Moses, with the ten commandments, and Jesus, with the bible, as well as twelve saints. The inscription at the base reads: "The laws were given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ".



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### Dates For Your Diary

- 18th Century Peripatetic Poor Talk  
17th July - 7:30pm  
see page 5
- Stanton St. John Village Walk  
30th July - 2:30pm
- August Newsletter Submissions Deadline  
4th August
- Stanton St. John Countryside Walk  
6th August - 2pm
- St Edburg's Church Heritage Day  
9th September  
see page 4

### AVAILABLE NOW!

Our new DVD, **Bicester's Buildings**, is on sale now. See the website for more details.





# Village History

## Newton Purcell

Newton Purcell is a village to the north of Bicester, about 4.5 miles southeast of Brackley.

The course of the Roman road that linked Alchester with Lactodurum (now Towcester) runs through the parish just east of the village. The main road through the village, the A4421, still follows its course. The Domesday Book of 1086 does not mention Newton Purcell. The manor was created in the 12th century as a 'new tun' for the Purcel family, mainly with land from the manors of Mixbury and Fringford. These manors had different overlords, and as a result the Purcels had feudal obligations to both.

Mixbury was part of the honour of St Valery, which later became part of the Honour of Wallingford. In 1213 Robert de St Valery gave the mesne lordship of Mixbury to the Augustinian Osney Abbey, and the Purcels and their successors had to pay the abbey rent until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536. In 1475 the manor was still held by a Thomas Purcel, but it had left the family by 1523. The Purcels had a moated manor house which has not survived, but in the 1950s fragments of its moat and a mound where it stood were still visible just east of the village.

Architectural evidence suggests that the parish church of Saint

Michael and All Angels was a Norman church built in the middle of the 12th century. The earliest documentary evidence of the church's existence is slightly later, when Ralph Purcel granted the church to the Augustinian

Bicester Priory in 1200. Little survives of this original church, except a 12th century Norman doorway and a 13th century piscina. In 1813 the church was repaired and most of its original features were destroyed. In 1875, the architect C.N. Beazley restored the building and added the vestry, bell turret and south porch. St. Michael's rectory was built in 1844 and the parish is now part of the Shelswell benefice.

The parish was still being farmed under the open field system in 1679. There is no Act of Parliament for the parish's enclosure, so it must have been done by agreement, probably before the end of the 17th century.

The village's Church of England



St Michael and All Angels Church

school was built in 1872 and enlarged in 1898. It was reorganised as a junior school in 1929 and was still open in 1954.

In 1899 the Great Central Railway completed its main line to London through the eastern part of the then Shelswell parish and built Finmere for Buckingham Station where the line crosses the main road, about half a miles northeast of Newton Purcell. Buckingham was almost five miles from the Great Central station, so the name was subsequently shortened to the more appropriate "Finmere". British Railways closed Finmere station in 1963, and closed the section of the Great Central line through the station and parish in 1966.

- Matthew Hathaway

## Marj's Memories

### A Song We Sang in the War

It is surprising how much understanding children had during the war. When I was about 9 years old, my friend was proud to show me a ring that her older brother had given her. It had the RAF "wings" on it. At the time he was the pilot of a Hurricane plane. On one mission he came home with 19 bullet holes in the cockpit of his plane and a piece of shrapnel in his eye. (It could have been the Battle of Britain).

One of the things we looked forward to was a song sheet that we bought regularly from Lang's the paper shop in Sheep Street. There would be the words to songs such as "Silver Wings in the Moonlight" and this one, that I remember singing and thinking of my friend Ann's brother.

Coming in on a wing and a prayer  
Coming in on a wing and a prayer  
We have one motor gone, but we'll still carry on  
Coming in on a wing and a prayer

What a show, what a fight  
Yes, we really hit the target for tonight  
And we sing as we drift through the air  
Look below there's our fiend over there  
With a full crew aboard and our trust in The Lord  
Coming in on a wing and a prayer.

My friend's brother was Tudor Jones, who later became a school teacher at St Edburg's CofE School.

- Marjorie Dean MBE



## Bygone Bicester (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

### 4th July 1863

**NEW CHAPEL AT BICESTER** - On Tuesday last the foundation stone of a new chapel, in connection with the United Methodist Free Church, was laid. The friends of this movement have purchased the house formerly occupied by Mr W. Stevens, in Sheep Street, and the ground having been cleared, the ceremony of laying what is called the foundation stone was performed by Captain King. After the ceremony addresses were delivered by the same gentleman, and the Reverend Joseph Coleman, of London.

At the conclusion the company adjourned to the Black Boy Assembly Room, where a very large number of persons sat down to tea. After tea a public meeting was held. Captain King was in the chair, who in opening the meeting gave a clear and full exposition of the system of Church government with reference to Free Methodism. Addresses were then delivered by Messrs Crapper, Kench, Gould, G. Carter, Esq., of Buckingham, and others.

The contributions amounted to £82 4s 8d, exclusive of the results of the public tea.

### 21st July 1905

**A FINE PLANT** - The Bicester cemetery has during the last few days been visited by large numbers of people. The object of attraction being a very fine specimen of the plant known as the "Yucca Gloriosa", which at the present time is in full bloom.

The plant is on the grave of the late Mr Thomas Sirett, where it was planted some nine or ten years ago, since which time it has flourished and made considerable headway. The flowers on the plant have never before come to perfection, and are now well worth inspection. There are two flower spikes, each being from seven to eight feet high, and bearing hundreds of blooms.

By Sunday next the plant should be at its best, and those who take an interest in this direction cannot do better than pay a visit to the cemetery.

### 25th July 1947

**OUTING** - A party of children attending the Parish Church Sunday School had their annual outing on Saturday. They went to Oxford by train, in the care of their teachers, then proceeded to Folly Bridge, where they embarked on a steamer for Abingdon.

Following a short stay there, they returned to Oxford, where some went on a shopping expedition and others enjoyed themselves in the parks.

An enjoyable day concluded with the return journey by the 7pm train from Oxford.

### 7th July 1989

**SUPERSTORE APPROVED** - A plan for a new Tesco food superstore on the edge of Bicester has been approved by district councillors.

Cherwell District Council's south area planning committee agreed a plan by Charterhouse McGregor for the building of a 43,000 sq ft superstore, a petrol filling station and parking on land north of Bicester's coming southern bypass and east of the A421 Oxford road.

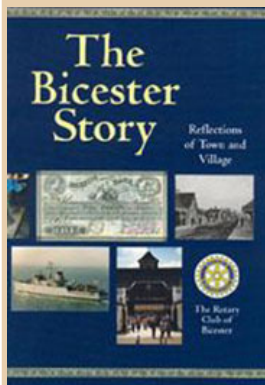
Planning officer Mr Bob Duxbury told councillors there had been problems with the scheme's landscaping. But after a lot of effort they had arrived at a very acceptable scheme. The site had been enlarged to ensure adequate car parking and landscaping.

Outline planning permission was granted on appeal last August for the building of a 48,000 sq ft food superstore, a petrol filling station and three retail warehouses, totalling 97,500 sq ft, on this site and land to the east.

The land for the site of the superstore was formerly owned by Bicester Sports Association.

Councillors had deferred the application at their previous meeting for further landscaping details to be submitted.

## Final Rotation



After over sixty years of charitable works and community projects the Rotary Club of Bicester has recently ended.

They formed in 1954 as "a practical, effective and enjoyable way of addressing the critical issues of today". Since then they have been involved in numerous projects to aid both the local community and local charities, and play their part on a global scale as part of the Rotary International organisation.

From a local history point of view their biggest contribution came in 1999 when they published *The Bicester Story*. An invaluable source for anyone interested in the history of the town and local area.



- Matthew Hathaway



# Roll of Honour

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

**Driver William Allen**, of Fritwell.

Died: 12<sup>th</sup> July 1917      Aged: 20      Served in: Royal Field Artillery

**Private George Henry Wise**, of Kirtlington.

Died: 15<sup>th</sup> July 1917      Aged: 24      Served in: Royal Army Service Corps

**Private Arthur William Holton**, of Wendlebury.

Died: 26<sup>th</sup> July 1917      Aged: 36      Served in: Northumberland Yeomanry

**Captain Humphry Paul Buckley**, of Kirtlington.

Died: 29<sup>th</sup> July 1917      Aged: 22      Served in: East Yorkshire Regiment

**Lance Corporal William Henry Hall**, of Bicester.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917      Aged: 34      Served in: Wiltshire Regiment

**Private Gerald Horatio Herbert**, of Kirtlington.

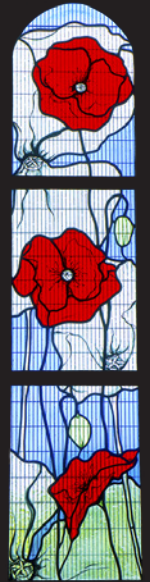
Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917      Aged: 37      Served in: Welsh Guards

**Private Edwin James Maccabee**, of Lower Heyford.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917      Aged: 35      Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

**Private Isaac Henry Shepherd**, of Merton.

Died: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917      Aged: 27      Served in: Royal Berkshire Regiment



You can view the list we have put together from all the war memorials in the area on our website at: [www.blhs.org.uk/index.php/roh](http://www.blhs.org.uk/index.php/roh). Please help us fill in the blanks and add as much information as we can. If you have any information, stories, photos or items about anyone from the local area who served in the war then please get in touch.

## Church Heritage Day



The cast of the first re-enactment in 2012

## Talks Update

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

### Monday 17th July

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

### Monday 18th September

This meeting begins with our AGM, which will then be followed by some **Historical Miscellany.**

### Monday 16th October

Martin Greenwood talks to us about **Evacuation to Bicester and Local Villages in 1939-45.**

## Local History and How to do it Talk

Back in May Liz Woolley returned to give us another of her informative talks. This time the subject was Researching Local History.

She started by telling us how she got started by researching the history of her son's primary school. That led her to speaking to old pupils and eventually culminated in producing a booklet as part of a campaign to save the school building.

The study of local history can focus on a variety of things, from landscape features or buildings to groups or events. The important thing is to establish from the beginning what you want to find out and what your end goal is.

The first task in any research project is to determine what has already been done, both in research and what you plan to produce. This can be done with an online search, by contacting the relevant local history society or organisation, or by contacting the local museum.

Once you know what you need to find out you can begin checking primary sources for information. These could be original documents, like census returns and minute books, or anecdotal records, like oral history recordings. If it's within living memory then interviewing people from the time can be a great primary source too.

It's also a good idea to check secondary sources for information that can corroborate the primary source information you find and lead you to other primary sources. Victoria County History is a great secondary source to check, either online or in print. Wikipedia is always worth a look too. Both sites list their sources.

When researching buildings you should consider location, aspect and layout, and how they affected

or were influenced by the building's purpose. You should look at the materials and techniques used in its construction, as well as the phases it was built in. Was it all built in one go or were parts added at later dates? Place names can give clues to the history of the location, as can date stones or any other inscriptions.

Talking to people is always a good way of finding out the sort of day to day things that people never think to record.

When looking at images, particularly photographs, always remember that the background can sometimes give more information than the main subject.

Maps can show how an area has changed over time and how later developments could have been influenced. These could be privately commissioned, Ordnance Survey, or even auction plans.

Original documents include census returns, poll books, electoral registers, birth, marriage and death registers, parish registers, wills, telephone directories, school records, street and trade directories, council papers, health records, newspapers, poor law papers and church records. Some of these are available online or from the National Archives in London. A lot of them are also available at the Oxfordshire History Centre in Cowley.

Wherever your research takes you, it is always a good idea to keep a record of where you found each piece of information, and remember to keep questioning things, don't automatically take everything as true.

A list of websites and organisations for research relating to the society's area can be found on our website: [www.blhs.org.uk/index.php/links](http://www.blhs.org.uk/index.php/links)

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