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Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

Hidden Bicester

As summer comes to an end it becomes time for the committee to prepare a new calendar for next year. We are teaming up with Coles Bookstore for a second year running to produce our third annual calendar, and this time we have selected the theme of 'Hidden Bicester'. Drawing attention to some of

the town's quirky or forgotten features and presenting them within a historical context.

The following images are a taster of those we want to include. Can you identify what each one is and where it is located?

- Matthew Hathaway



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Dates For Your Diary

- Annual General Meeting**
18th September - 7:30pm
see page 5
- October Newsletter Submissions Deadline**
29th September
- Family History Fair**
7th October
see page 2
- Evacuation to Bicester Talk**
16th October - 7:30pm
see page 6

AVAILABLE NOW!

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



Marj's Memories Starting work in Grendon Prison

After waiting for 4 months to join the Prison Service, on the first day of spring in 1977 I went into Grendon Prison for my first day's work. I had been afraid to cycle past the drive that leads to the main road and there I was going through the gates.

At that time, Grendon was the only prison in the world of its kind; a psychiatric high security establishment where prisoners volunteer to go for "change". They had to apply at their parent prison. On entry they start off in an Assessment Unit and are assessed for some months and, if suitable, are allocated to a wing for group therapy which takes place every morning. Everyone is on first name terms, including staff and it could seem an easy option, but the therapy is intense and reaches into their crimes and past lives which they have to address. In the afternoons some have jobs and some go to Education. They must be responsible for their actions and take part in all aspects of the community.

At the time I started work there people from prison establishments came from all over the world to observe the unique ethos taking place within those walls.

The criteria are still:

- Cat B or C
- Has more than 18 months to serve

- Has been off Category A or escape list for at least six months
- Meets "drug-free" criteria (no positive drug tests within two months of referral)
- No current diagnosis of major mental illness
- Comprehension of rules/signs compact
- Accepts responsibility for/is not appealing against offence
- Meets self-harm criteria (no self-harm within two months of referral)

The first big gate was unlocked to let me in, then my proof of identity was given in at the hatch and I was escorted to the next big gate and a kind Auxiliary let me through. (It's all very different now). As the Auxiliary opened the gate he said, "Have you come here to work, first day?" I said I had and he then said, "Well, don't work too hard or you'll get the sack". He knew I would laugh and it really put me at ease. He was a lovely man, along with so many like him who worked in Grendon.

There are now several therapy prisons in the country like Grendon. Spring Hill Prison nearby, is an open prison, which comes under the same administration as Grendon but is not connected and has an entirely different regime.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

OFHS Family History Fair



Oxfordshire Family History Society will again be holding their Family History Fair at The Marlborough School, just on the edge of Woodstock, on Saturday 7th October. The event is free to all visitors and will run from 10am to 4pm.

The fair will feature other family history societies, publishers, dealers in secondhand books and postcards, and organisations with specific interest areas. The stands will be spread across both the Marlborough Enterprise Centre Hall and the adjoining Sports Hall.

OFHS's own range of transcripts and search services will be available for consultation with experienced

advisors to help you if you are new to research or have a "brick-wall" you would like help to get over.

A range of delicious hot and cold food, cakes, teas and coffees etc, will again be provided by Good Food Catering, who has received many compliments at previous fairs!

Stalls include: Berkshire FHS, Buckinghamshire FHS, Northamptonshire FHS, Romany and Traveller FHS, Suffolk FHS, Past Lives Genealogy & Social History Services, Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives, Surrey History Centre, Bucks Genealogical Society, Victoria County History, Oxfordshire History Centre, and many more.

Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

26th September 1863

HARVEST FESTIVITIES - On Wednesday last, thanksgiving services were held in the parish church of Bicester. In the morning a very suitable sermon was preached by the Rev. J.C. Blomfield, from the words "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, shall not cease."

After the service the labourers on the farms of Mr Jonas Paxton, Mr Thomas Paxton, Mr C. Fowler, Mrs Ann Phillips, and Mr Taylor, had a good dinner provided for them in the large tent used the previous day at the Flower Show. There was an abundance of good beef, ale, and plum puddings. About 130 sat down to dinner, and were waited on by Mrs Jonas Paxton, Mr Fowler, Mr Kirby, and Rev. J.L. Frampton, Mrs Watts and the Misses Hitchman.

After dinner the Rev. J.W. Watts proposed the health of "the Queen," which was duly honoured, and the Rev. F.H. Salter proposed the health of "the Masters," which was very warmly received. The young folks then adjourned to the field, to engage in cricket and other rural games, while the older folks with pipe and glass sat down on benches to watch the youngsters, and recall "the good old times" when they were young.

A match at cricket was got up between eleven of Mr Fowler's men and eleven selected by Mr Phillips. With the assistance of Mr George Berry, who is an excellent batsman, Mr Phillips' side won with 7 wickets to spare. We are glad to say that the harvest feast passed off in a most suitable manner, nothing occurring that would offend the good taste of any one present.

In the evening another service was held in the parish church, when an excellent sermon was preached by the Venerable Archdeacon Bickersteth, from the words, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." There were large congregations present at both services.

It was announced by the vicar that at the evening service a collection would be made, the proceeds to be given to some benevolent object. But some amiable persons having industriously circulated a report that the collection was to pay for the dinner given by the farmers to the labourers, it was determined at the last moment not to have a collection.

22nd September 1905

WESLEYAN HARVEST FESTIVAL - The harvest thanksgiving services at the Wesleyan Church were held on Sunday. The building was tastefully decorated with flowers, fruit and vegetables, the rostrum receiving special attention, being adorned with some very fine bunches of grapes.

The preacher at both the morning and evening services was Councillor Gregory (of London), who was listened to by large congregations. The same gentleman also addressed a young people's service in the afternoon, when the children of the Sunday School presented their offerings during the singing of a hymn.

On Monday evening, instead of a service as in previous years, the sale of the produce commenced privately at six o'clock. Mr Holiday had promised to conduct an auction sale, but as he was unable to be present Mr J. Hedges sold by Dutch auction, and every lot was disposed of. Half the total proceeds of the festival will be divided between

Bicester Nursing Home and the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford.

5th September 1947

BICESTER GARRISON SPORTS - The sixth annual sports of the Bicester Garrison, held on Thursday last week, marked the first occasion of the event being held on the garrison's own ground. All the previous meetings have taken place on the Bicester Sports Ground.

The events were, as usual, keenly contested, especially the open ones, and a large crowd enjoyed the proceedings.

The Garrison Cup was won by No.1 Company, R.A.O.C., the holders (R.E.M.E.) being runners up. Pte. Bryth, of the newly-arrived Seaforth Highlanders, won the open 100 yards in 19 4/5th seconds, with Sgt. Kremer, Intelligence Corps, second, and Lt. Hume, Seaforths, third. A/C Robertson, R.A.F. Bicester, was first in the mile open, in 4 mins. 37 secs., and the R.A.F. also won the one mile relay. The Women's Services open relay went to W.R.N.S. (Culham).

The veteran's race was won by Mr Eric Trinder, with Mr E.A. Clifton second and Mr T. Ancil, of Launton, third.

The band of the R.A.O.C. played during the afternoon, and the gymnastic display was given by the A.P.T.C.

At the conclusion of the sports, Mrs Cox distributed the prizes, and Brigadier Cox, commander of the garrison, welcomed the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders.

15th September 1989

TOWN PLAN LAUNCHED - Cherwell District Council is now taking the initiative to achieve long-term plans to bring in pedestrian precincts in Bicester town centre. The plans are coupled with the need to build a multi-storey car park in the town plus an inner-link road. District councillors at Cherwell's development committee on Monday are being asked to give the go-ahead to council officers to investigate the purchase of land and proceed with the plans.

Cherwell's chief planning officer Mr Keith Hollinshead explained that as the Bicester bypass was due to be completed next year, it was now time to get on with achieving the plans for the town centre. The plans are to create pedestrian priority areas in the whole of the Market Square and in most of Sheep Street from the junction with Launton Road.

A first stage for the Market Square pedestrian precinct might be to close one of the two roads through the square. To achieve the pedestrian areas an inner-link road is needed to run from the London Road / Launton Road junction behind the southern side of Market Square and coupled with improvements to Chapel Street.

A third aspect of the plans was to build a multi-storey car park on the existing Crown car park, behind Tesco's store. This followed a recent car park survey by traffic consultants which showed that Bicester needed 350 extra car parking spaces. But as this car park would be closed while the multi-storey was being built, a replacement surface car park would be needed elsewhere.

Cherwell has identified a possible site behind the southern side of Market Square and to reach this a new inner-link road was needed. The new road would

also take local traffic round the pedestrian precincts. Cherwell is also suggesting that after the multi-storey car park is built two small surface car parks in Chapel Street and Franklin's Yard could be redeveloped.

Plans for the precincts and the inner-link road have been proposed for several years and were included in the recent Bicester Local Plan. Oxfordshire County

Council had suggested it would build the inner-link road but could not find the money. They hoped a developer wanting a retail warehouse behind the Market Square would fund the road, but the developer was only willing to pay for a road up to the warehouse. Plans for the warehouse didn't go ahead and the idea for the inner-link road has languished until now.

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Adverts taken from Bicester Church News - 1971

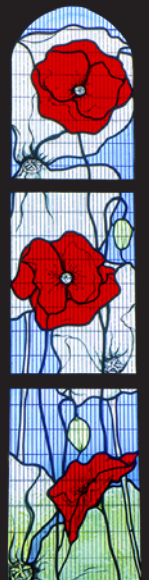
Roll of Honour

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

- Private William Long**, of Oddington.
Died: 3rd September 1917 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry
- Private Charles Painter**, of Bucknell.
Died: 11th September 1917 Aged: 36 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry
- Private Allan Dennis Cross**, of Cottisford.
Died: 20th September 1917 Aged: 21 Served in: Royal West Surrey Regiment
- Gunner Henry Best**, of Bucknell.
Died: 25th September 1917 Aged: 35 Served in: Royal Garrison Artillery
- Private Donald Pettigrew**, of Horton-cum-Studley.
Died: 25th September 1917 Aged: 25 Served in: Royal Sussex Regiment
- Acting Corporal Frank Allan Mulford**, of Islip.
Died: 26th September 1917 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Army Service Corps
- Private Frederick Perks**, of Lower Heyford.
Died: 26th September 1917 Served in: Machine Gun Corps
- Private Harry Thomas Stevens**, of Somerton.
Died: 26th September 1917 Aged: 33 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

The following men died in previous months, but their details have only just come to light.

- Pioneer George Temple**, of Bicester.
Died: 19th January 1917 Aged: 17 Served in: Royal Engineers
- Sapper Arthur Penn**, of Launton.
Died: 11th February 1917 Served in: Royal Engineers
- Private William Jenkins**, of Bicester.
Died: 29th March 1917 Aged: 34 Served in: King's Liverpool Regiment
- Rifleman Thomas Herbert Simmonds**, of Bicester.
Died: 23rd April 1917 Aged: 27 Served in: King's Royal Rifle Corps
- Sergeant Ernest Arthur Lambourne MM**, of Launton.
Died: 4th June 1917 Aged: 20 Served in: Canadian Machine Gun Corps
- Rifleman William Harris**, of Bicester.
Died: 14th June 1917 Served in: Rifle Brigade



Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM is at 7.30pm on Monday 18th September at The Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester.

This is your chance to hear about what the

society has achieved over the past year; find out about our plans for next year; put questions to the Committee; offer help or suggestions; and renew your subscription.

Village History Oddington



St Andrew's Church, on the edge of Otmoor.

The village of Oddington is about 5 miles south of Bicester. It lies close to the River Ray on the northern edge of Otmoor.

The toponym is derived from the Old English for "Otta's Hill", possibly after the same person who gave his name to Otmoor.

A mention of Oddington in a Papal bull written in 1146 suggests that the village had a parish church by the middle of the 12th century. But the present Saint Andrew's church was built at the end of the 13th century. The buttresses of the nave are late 13th century, and the font is believed to be from that time. Some features of the chancel are early 14th century, but in 1821 the chancel was demolished and rebuilt.

Around 1885 the church was heavily restored under the direction

of the architect E.G. Bruton. The bell tower and the north wall of the chancel were rebuilt, the vestry and north aisle were added and several windows inserted.

Inside the church are two unusual monuments. The first is an early 16th-century monumental brass in memory of Ralph Hamsterley, who had been parish priest and died in 1518. It is a cadaver monument, showing his corpse in its burial shroud with worms protruding from his skeleton, which is an unusual style for monumental brasses in England. The second unusual monument is a large pieta at the west end of the nave. It is decorated with Maori totems in memory of Maori servicemen killed in the First World War.

The tower has three bells. The



Ralph Hamsterley monument

treble was cast in 1609. James Keene, of Woodstock, cast the tenor in 1626. Thomas Mears, of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, cast the youngest of the three bells in 1804. There is also a Sanctus bell, cast by an unknown founder in about 1614.

Gilbert Sheldon held the living of the parish from 1636. Sheldon already held the living of Hackney and received that of Ickford, Buckinghamshire, at about the same time as that of Oddington. After the Restoration of the Monarchy, Sheldon was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in 1663.

- Matthew Hathaway



St Andrew's Church

Talks Update

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

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**.

Monday 20th November

Society member Pat Snelson gives us **A Window into Bicester's Architectural History**.

The Peripatetic Poor in the 18th Century Talk

Many parish documents reveal details of the lives of those from the bottom layer of society, often in their own words. They show that the poor were more mobile in the past than is generally assumed.

The provisions of the Poor Law Act 1601 replaced informal care of the poor with a compulsory system. This became more pressing with the Dissolution of the Monasteries from 1536, as these establishments had traditionally fulfilled this role. The ecclesiastical parish was the unit of local administration and was responsible for law & order, highways and the poor. An individual had a right to parish relief if they were sick, orphaned, elderly, 'unable' or 'impotent'. The poor rate was a compulsory tax levied on land.

The responsibility of others in society to support the poor was accepted and regarded as a Christian virtue.

The 1601 Act identified several classes of pauper:

- Vagabonds/vagrants/sturdy beggars – to be punished and sent back to where they belonged.
- Labouring poor – to be set to productive work. Early workhouses were set up for accommodation and work, but were not generally financially viable. Children could be apprenticed to local craftsmen and traders.
- Impotent poor, those unable to work – to be maintained by the community.

Accounts from the Overseers of the Poor show 'pensions', particularly to widows, being paid over extended periods. This could also include the provision of almshouses or poorhouses, rather than workhouses.

Parishes were obliged to provide for their own poor, but disputes over which parish was responsible for a

pauper's poor relief led to the passing of the Settlement Act 1662, which allowed relief only to established residents of a parish – mainly through birth, marriage and apprenticeship. This act allowed for the removal of people that local justices deemed to be likely to become chargeable to the parish.

A further act of 1691 specified other ways in which settlement could be acquired. These included those holding a parish office for a year; owning an estate worth £10 or renting a property for £10 per annum, and illegitimate children were granted settlement in the parish in which they were born.

The 18th century saw growing unemployment and wages at levels which were too low to support families. This led to many arguments over settlement as parishes sort to reduce the drain on their limited funds.

Settlement law produced a range of documents which shed light on paupers' situations:

- Settlement Examinations – an account of a pauper's life to establish which parish should support them.
- Settlement Certificates – these proved which parish a family belonged to.
- Removal Orders – this allowed for a pauper to be returned to their home parish, following an unsuccessful examination.
- Correspondence between parishes, paupers away from home and their home parishes.

The need for poor law relief escalated in the late 18th century due to riots, poor harvests, agricultural depression and the Napoleonic blockade.

- Sally James

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