

A New Lease of Life



The old St Edburg's School building, on Cemetery Road, has been given a new lease of life and a new name, temporarily, by the OYAP Trust.

Formerly Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership, OYAP have moved into the building for a few years until the owners are ready to develop the building and its surrounding area.

But the building is too large for OYAP to use all on their own, so they have also invited other local groups in to utilise the space, including Radio Bicester, Bicester Green Gym, Bicester Museum & Heritage Trust, and Grassroots Bicester.

We are currently in the process of arranging some space of our own and plan to use it to store, and make publicly available, our archive. We also have some other exciting ideas for the space, so stay tuned for more news on this in the future.

OYAP's long term plan is to use the old St Edburg's site for as long as they are able to, but eventually they hope to find, or build, permanent premises where all the groups using the school site can move to and continue to co-habit and support each other in providing the wide variety of community services that they do.

- Matthew Hathaway



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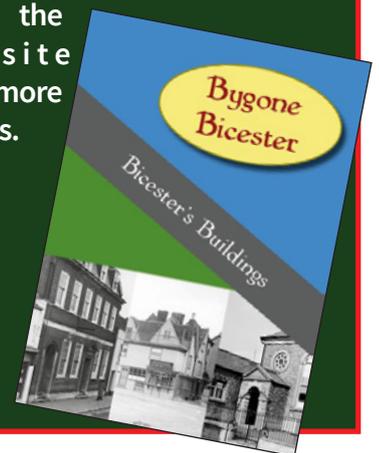
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Dates For Your Diary

- Pagans & Puritans Talk**
21st May - 7:30pm
see page 6
- June Newsletter Submissions Deadline**
1st June
- Coming of the Railways Talk**
18th June - 7:30pm
see page 6
- Folly Bridge & Grandpont Walk**
8th July
- Open Air Museum Visit**
22nd July

AVAILABLE NOW!

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



Marj's Memories

Rationing During the War and After

Rationing affected everyone, including royalty. A lot of planning and work was done by housewives to produce good meals. Clothing coupons were used when buying clothes.

I remember seeing the rations for one in the little grocery shop, then Bagwells, in Highfield and it looked something like this:

- 2 ounces of butter
- 4 ounces of margarine
- 4 ounces of sugar, weighed loose in a blue paper bag, but jam could be taken instead (not both). Most women made jam with plums or soft fruits from the garden.
- 1 ounce of cheese
- 4 rashers of bacon
- 2 ounces of tea
- 1 egg. We sometimes had powdered egg from a waxy packet. It was good for making scrambled egg.

The sweet ration was 4 ounces per person each week.

There were also "points" for such things as tinned food and biscuits.

Oranges were sometimes available. Word would go round the town that "there were oranges in such and such a shop" and the queues would form. But we always had an orange at Christmas, usually in our stocking, with an apple, pear and loose nuts.

Bread and potatoes were not rationed. Bread was possibly healthier, a bit like wholemeal bread is now.

Housewives were skilful in using substitutes. Most of us were well fed.

Wild rabbits were a big item in our diet and many nourishing dinners were made with them. Most vegetables were grown in the gardens and on the allotments. My father was a keen gardener and had 2 chain (22 yards) of allotment on Glory Farm. It was well stocked. On the edge was a row of sweet william, to attract the bees to set the peas and beans.

The war ended in 1945 but food rationing went on into the fifties. Soldiers serving their 2 years National Service were issued with food coupons when they had weekend passes to enable the people where they stayed to get food for them.

Sweets were taken off the ration soon after the war ended but, unfortunately, every sweet shop was empty and sweets were put back on ration again. Ice cream was back! I couldn't remember ever having ice cream until after the war.

Some children resorted to buying cough sweets from the chemist. There was a laxative called Bonamint, just like the normal chewing gum (little sugary cushions). We did try it and suffered the consequences!

- Marjorie Dean MBE

Roll of Honour

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

Sergeant Arthur East, of Franklin's Yard, Bicester.

Died: 16th May 1918 Aged: 41 Served in: Royal Army Medical Corps

Lieutenant Basil Howard Baker, of Chesterton.

Died: 22nd May 1918 Aged: 21 Served in: Rifle Brigade

Private Bert King, native of Bicester.

Died: 24th May 1918 Aged: 36 Served in: Border Regiment

Lance Corporal George James Cooper, of Murcott.

Died: 26th May 1918 Aged: 20 Served in: Royal West Surrey Regiment

Corporal William Henry Bates, of Souldern.

Died: 27th May 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Worcestershire Regiment

Private Samuel Hudson, of Crumps Butts, Bicester. Native of Launton.

Died: 27th May 1918 Aged: 22 Served in: Northumberland Fusiliers

Private Arthur John Merry, of Charlton-on-Otmoor.

Died: 27th May 1918 Aged: 18 Served in: Worcestershire Regiment

Private Henry James Watts, of Somerton. Native of Fritwell.

Died: 27th May 1918 Aged: 25 Served in: Machine Gun Corps

Private Percy Butler, of Weston-on-the-Green.

Died: 31st May 1918 Aged: 34 Served in: Devonshire Regiment



12th May 1882

GROWTH OF THE POPULATION - The Register General has just issued a return as to the growth of the population in 1881. At the last census there were in Oxfordshire 181,564 persons and at the end of June it is estimated that number had increased to 181,603.

During the year there were 1,135 marriages, and as it takes two persons to make a marriage it follows that 2,270 persons entered the "bonds".

Births numbered 5,611, of which 2,882 were males and 2,729 females. Deaths numbered 3,075, of which 1,528 were males and 1,547 females. There was thus an excess of 2,536 births over deaths; and as between males and females there was a slight excess in the number of deaths of the latter.

In March quarter 202 marriages took place; 280 in June quarter, 283 in September quarter, and 370 in December quarter. Births numbered 1,403 in March quarter, 1,443 in June, 1,360 in September, and 1,405 in December. Deaths numbered 854 in March, 760 in June, 633 in September, and 828 in December quarter.

The December quarter was the most fruitful as to marriage, the June quarter as to births, and the March quarter as to deaths.

8th May 1908

OPENING OF THE NEW ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL - Yesterday being the day set apart by the Church to be observed in remembrance of St Stenesclaus, was a red letter day with local Roman Catholics (who have long felt and lamented the lack of a fitting place of worship) when the beautiful new chapel in connection with the Priory, erected by the Olivetan Benedictine Nuns (from Igoville, Normandy), was consecrated with all the gorgeous and impressive ritual of the Roman Catholic Church, in the presence of a fairly large and irreverent congregation, some coming from a distance.

The Chapel, which is a very beautiful structure, was built by Messrs T Grimsley and Sons, Causeway, Bicester. The chief portion of the building, the Altar, is a most pleasing work of art, a small silver crucifix being suspended in the centre, while at either side are figures of the Saviour, with his hand upraised in an act of Benediction, and the Blessed Mother. A figure of the Holy Virgin has also been placed in the small gallery. The church is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Edburga (the Patron Saint of the old Benedictine Priory founded by Gilbert Bassett).

The service of consecration took place at 10:30pm, the ceremony of blessing the building being conducted by the Rev. Father Day, in the unavoidable absence, through illness, of the Lord Bishop of Birmingham. The liturgical chants, both in this service and in the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, were beautifully rendered by the Sisters' Choir.

After the ceremony of blessing the chapel had been going through, Solemn High Mass was sung. It was very fitting and appropriate that the Rev. Father Costedoat, who came to Bicester in 1902 with the Sisters of the Community, when they were exiled from the land of their birth rather than give up the faith of their Fathers, should have the honour of first offering the Sacrifice of the Mass

in the beautiful chapel in this home in which they found a resting place and welcome when banished from their native land.

The sermon, which was most appropriate, was preached by the Rev. Father Day from the text "From the rising of the sun, even to the setting thereof, my name is great amongst the Gentiles, said the Lord, and there shall be offered to me a sacrifice and a clean oblation, for my name is great amongst the Gentiles (Malachi, 1, 11)". Before discoursing on the text the preacher said he would, in the first place, offer his condolence to the Rev. Fathers and the Mother Prioress, the Sisters and faithful laity, on their disappointment at being deprived of the presence of the chief pastor of their Diocese. He then read a letter from the Bishop of Birmingham, in which his Lordship offered his congratulations on the opening of their Chapel, which he said was an appreciable change from the little oratory which had served all purposes for some time past. They would find the new chapel better fitted for the worship of God, and he hoped that in the new addition the Kingdom of God would be extended in Bicester. The Bishop much regretted his inability to be present, and said he would take the first opportunity of calling upon them. Father Day said the cause of the Bishop's absence was much lamented, and they all prayed for his speedy recovery from his illness.

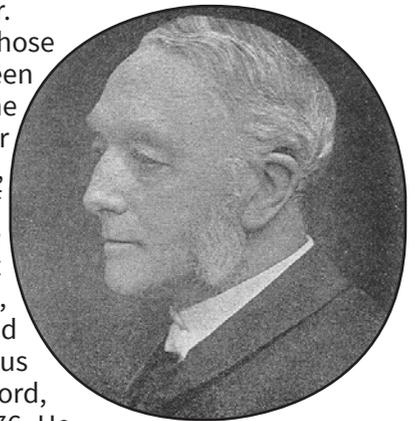
13th May 1932

DEATH OF THE REV. G.P. CRAWFURD - We regret to record the death which has occurred this week of a former vicar of Bicester, Rev. Gibbs Payne Crawford MA, who passed away at Morden house, Wimbledon, on Monday in his 78th year.

Mr Crawford, whose family have been connected with the county of Sussex for many generations, was the eldest son of the Rev. C.W. Payne Crawford JP, of East Court, East Grinstead, and was educated at Rugby and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, graduating there in 1876. He was ordained by the Bishop of Chichester in 1877 to the curacy of Slinford, Sussex, of which parish he took sole charge for five years.

In 1883 he moved to St Mary's, Reading, where he ministered as curate-in-charge of one of the churches in the parish until 1894, acting also as assistant chaplain to the Penitentiary and the St Helena Nursing Home, local secretary of the Free and Open Church Association, of the Additional Curates Society and the Universities Mission to Central Africa.

He was keenly interested in antiquarian and genealogical subjects, and some years ago published the registers of St Mary's, Reading, with biographical notes of the vicars, in two volumes, to which the Bishop of Oxford contributed a valuable preface; he also wrote for the



Berks. Archaeological Magazine a history of the Vachell family in Reading.

Before he left Reading Mr Crawford was presented by the parishioners with a chest of silver plate in the old English style, and an illuminated address; a silver sugar basin from the Sunday School, and a silver muffineer from the choir. The address alluded to the fact that during his work in All Saints' Parish the church had been beautified, largely through Mr Crawford's influence, and many of the people had known his friendly counsel and sympathy, both in their sorrows and their joys.

Mr Crawford succeeded as Vicar of Bicester the Rev. J. Blackburn-Kane, who passed away suddenly at the Vicarage in April 1894, at the age of 63, a few hours after conducting the morning service at the Parish Church.

Mr Crawford was instituted and inducted into the living of Bicester in the following July, and the congregation at the service included many from the parish of St Mary's, Reading. He was incumbent here until 1907, and did a great deal towards the reorganisation of the work of the church in Bicester. The various clubs and institutions associated with it were placed under a better and more systematic arrangement than had ever existed before.

One of Mr Crawford's greatest objects was the upkeep of the fabric of the church, upon which he bestowed much caring attention, and besides the preservation of the exterior the interior gradually underwent improvement, including the reconstruction of the reredos. Chief among the alterations to the interior were the removal of the screen at the chancel entrance, the removal of the seats near the chancel and paving it with wood blocks for supplementary choirs, and the removal of the vestry and seats near the font.

Another scheme completed at his instigation was the restoration of St Edburg's Hall. For the parish, the rural deanery, or the diocese, Mr Crawford was always carrying out some useful work. His gift of organisation was somewhat remarkable, and everything he undertook was carried out systematically and thoroughly. The church services were hearty and largely attended, the choir during festivals always being augmented both vocally and instrumentally. He took a special interest in both the day and Sunday schools, and the number of scholars attending the latter frequently taxed the accommodation the buildings afforded. The young people of the parish were keenly catered for and Mr Crawford was instrumental in the formation of a company of the Church Lads' Brigade. The sick and needy were never forgotten, whilst kindly words of advice and encouragement often cheered those who were less fortunate in the struggle of life.

He resigned the living in April 1907, on appointment to Sonning, Berkshire, and the Rev. W. O'Reilly succeeded him. On leaving Bicester Mr Crawford was presented with a silver lamp by the St Edburg's Missionary Guild, a silver flower vase and a baptismal shell with silver mountings by the Sunday Schools and a purse of £80 in gold and an illuminated address by the parish. Warm tribute was paid to his work in the town during 13 years.

His wife pre-deceased him in 1929 after an illness of a few days. She was the Hon. Edith Ellen Louisa, a sister of the present Lord Saye and Sele, and she was married to Mr Crawford in 1896. Their son was born at Bicester 28 years ago. Mr Crawford resigned the living of Sonning in

1925 and went to Morden House, Wimbledon.

The funeral service took place yesterday morning at Wimbledon Parish Church at 9:30am. After which the coffin was conveyed by road to Bicester for the interment, where the choir led the singing of the hymn "Abide With Me". In the evening a muffled peal was rung on the Bicester bells.

3rd May 1957

DEMOLITION OF MARKET END HOUSE SUGGESTED - Councillor Gerald Pilbeam told Bicester Urban Council at its monthly meeting at the Garth on Tuesday that rather than spend thousands of pounds on repairs to the Market End House flats at Highfield, the property should be demolished.

Market End House, formerly the Bicester Workhouse, was purchased by the Urban Council and converted into 18 flats at a cost of £16,000. But in recent months the condition of the property has been the subject of frequent discussion by the Urban Council.

It was raised on Tuesday by Councillor Goble, who said he had repeatedly called for action in the past, and it was now time something was done. He said the condition of the property was very bad, and thought painting and other repairs were urgently needed.

Councillor Leach said that the simple answer was to re-house the tenants and close the place.

Councillor Goble said that while the approach and surroundings of Market End House were disgraceful there were several nice flats which were well-kept by tenants. Councillor Leach suggested that, of the 18 flats, not more than four were up to standard.

Mr Homer, the council's assistant housing officer, said about half the flats were in good condition.

Councillor Pillbeam claimed that the building was structurally rotten. Damp was visible four feet up the walls. Rather than spend thousands of pounds on repairs, it should be pulled down. The site would be ideal for a block of new flats.

Councillor Clifton said demolition and the subsequent rehousing would have considerable effect on council rents. It is easy to talk flippantly, but the tenants of other houses have got to pay.

Councillor Leach said the Council had already spent a great deal of money on the buildings.

Councillor Goble hoped that Councillor Pillbeam, by his remarks, did not mean that the Council should not take steps to remedy the obvious need for repairs.

Councillor Clothier suggested that the Council should visit the flats. "The exterior of the building was in pretty dreadful condition. We have got to decide how long we are going to keep people in this building if it is as bad as Councillor Pillbeam says it is."

Councillor Heath, supporting Councillor Goble, said that the urgent repairs should be carried out immediately. "People have still got to live there," he said. He had been disgusted when he recently visited the building.

Councillor Winterbone suggested that Council should ask the tenants to tidy up the place as well.

Councillor Goble said he had raised the matter in order that the council should act. "My sole concern is to get the Council to do something about Market End House."

It was finally agreed that the housing committee should inspect the premises.

Village History Wendlebury

The village of Wendlebury lies about 2 miles southwest of Bicester, next to Junction 9 of the M40.

Before the Norman conquest of England a man called Asgar held the manor. But, after the Conquest, William the Conqueror granted Wendlebury to Geoffrey de Mandeville. The manor remained with his heirs, including his grandson of the same name whom King Stephen made 1st Earl of Essex in about 1140. The de Mandeville lineage ended with the death of William FitzGeoffrey de Mandeville, 3rd Earl of Essex, in 1227, and its lands, including Wendlebury, passed to Humphrey de Bohun, 2nd Earl of Hereford, in 1236. Henry III made Humphrey Earl of Essex in 1239. Wendlebury then remained with the Earls of Hereford and Essex until the death of Humphrey de Bohun, 7th Earl of Hereford in 1373.

The manor of Wendlebury then consisted of two knight's fees. After the 7th Earl's death the manor was divided, with one fee passing to the Earl's elder daughter Eleanor de Bohun, wife of Thomas of Woodstock, 1st Duke of Gloucester. There is no known record to indicate whether the other fee passed to Eleanor's younger sister Mary de Bohun, wife of Henry Bolingbroke, but Eleanor's half seems to have passed to Eleanor's daughter, Anne of Gloucester. In 1403 it belonged to Anne's second husband, Edmund Stafford, 5th Earl of Stafford. But there is no known record of the overlordship of Wendlebury after 1403, so it seems to have lapsed.

In 1279 Thame Abbey held five virgates of land at Wendlebury. The abbey seems to have disposed of this land before 1317 as an inventory of its estates then makes no mention of Wendlebury. Rewley Abbey was founded in 1281 and by 1293 held eight virgates of arable land plus 20 acres of meadow at Wendlebury. Rewley retained the estate until the Dissolution of the Monasteries, when it passed to Thomas Pope of Wroxton Abbey.

The earliest known record of the parish church of Saint Giles is from early in the 13th century. It was cruciform until 1639 when the south transept was found to be so unsafe that it was demolished.

In 1757 the remainder of the building was found to be unsafe and in March 1761 everything but the bell tower was demolished. But by September a new nave, chancel and two transepts had been completed, incorporating general building materials, early Decorated Gothic windows, and a Perpendicular Gothic doorway, from the



St Giles' Church

old church.

But the foundations continued to give trouble and in 1902 the mediaeval tower and 18th-century south transept were demolished. At the same time the architect John Oldrid Scott restored the remainder of the building, renewed the roof and installed new seating.

The tower had three bells: two cast in the 16th century and the third in 1695. Since the demolition of the tower these have stood in the west end of the nave. The west gable of the nave now has a bell-cot with one bell.

The Lion public house was built in the 17th century and seems to have been trading as an inn by 1732. In 1790 a farmer from Merton started a brewery in the village but the business failed and in 1809 was put up for sale. A Bicester brewer bought it in 1820.

An open field system of farming continued in the parish until 1801, when its common lands were enclosed by Act of Parliament. 1,160 acres of land were enclosed, of which 500 acres were awarded to the lord of the manor, Thomas Coker.

A National School was opened in 1850 and new school buildings for it were completed in 1863. In 1927 it was reorganised as a junior school, with pupils of secondary school age going to Bicester. It became a controlled school in 1952, but has since closed.

The Oxford and Bletchley Railway, completed in 1851, passed through the parish. The London and North Western Railway opened Wendlebury Halt, southeast of the village, in 1905. The Railways Act 1921 made the L&NWR part of the new London, Midland and Scottish Railway, which closed Wendlebury Halt in 1926.

- Matthew Hathaway

Summer Walks and Outings

The first of our walks this summer is on Sunday 8th July, when Liz Woolley guides us around the history of **Folly Bridge & Grandpont, South Oxford**.

Further details and an application form for this are being sent out with this newsletter, but please contact Sally James if you don't receive one and would like to attend.

The walk is open to members only, at a charge of £6 per person. But this cost does not include refreshments.

Then, on Sunday 22nd July, we are planning a trip to the **Chiltern Open Air Museum**, near Chalfont St Giles. Further details for this will be announced shortly.

Talks Update

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

Monday 21st May

Tim Healey talks to us about **Pagans & Puritans - The Story of May Morning in Oxfordshire.**

Monday 18th June

Liz Woolley returns to tell us about **The Coming of the Railway to Oxford.**

Monday 16th July

John Beaumont comes to talk us through some **Wireless War Secrets.**

Charles Dickens Talk

Charles Dickens (1812-1870), well-known as a writer and actor, was keenly aware of social problems resulting from poverty and disease in 19th century society. His interest extended to social destitution; conditions in workhouses, orphanages, prisons and hospitals; child labour; education and public health.

Social destitution stemmed from the large shift of population from the country to the towns. During the period from 1800-1880, London's population grew from 1 million to 4½ million with resulting slums, disease, lack of sanitation, unemployment and vagrancy.

In early 19th century medicine many pre-scientific notions persisted: diagnosis was vague and treatment primitive. Disease arose from contaminated water, poor nutrition, lack of daylight and prolonged, intense physical activity.

The 1848 Public Health Act was the first step on the road to improved public health. Later in the century, the Public Health Act of 1875 addressed the problems of poor urban living conditions. Advances in medical training and innovation, and the discovery of germ theory, when men such as Pasteur, Lister and Koch were to the fore, improved Victorians' lives.

Dickens' approach to public health was influenced by his childhood experiences. His father spent a period in a debtors' prison and Dickens worked in a boot-blackening factory to help support the family.

He suffered from insomnia and regularly walked the streets at night encountering "homelessness, drunkenness and vice on the streets". Visits to hospitals;

reading *The Lancet*; discussions with doctors and his own health problems added to his knowledge of illness and its origins. He was ahead of his time with regard to clinical enquiry, details of symptoms, and physical and mental examination. Dickens' detailed descriptions of his fictional characters' conditions were based on real cases and included ailments only recently recognised by medical science at that time.

Dickens was prominent in campaigns against poverty and destitution. He publicised the shortcomings of Poor Law reforms and promoted prevention and treatment of medical conditions.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act established workhouses for the 'undeserving poor' – the elderly, the sick and orphans. Dickens was among those who condemned the harsh regime. Dickens worked with Angela Burdett-Coutts to establish a home for fallen women, Urania Cottage, in Shepherds Bush and to support, so-called, 'ragged schools' for the very poor.

Dickens' concern for social problems and public health is reflected repeatedly in his novels. Prison and public health reforms are covered in *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations*, whilst orphans Oliver Twist, Pip, Little Nell and Edwin Drood are well-known characters. The education of the poor is examined in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Appalled by child mortality in the 1850s, Dickens was an early supporter of Great Ormond Street Hospital, and he featured a disguised advertisement for the hospital in his last completed novel *Our Mutual Friend*.

- Sally James

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