



Extraordinary Women



The BLHS display - photo courtesy of Philip Edwards

On Saturday 8th September we took part in the Heritage Day at St Edburg's Church celebrating the Extraordinary Women of Bicester.

For our display we chose to honour Maud Franklin, Eliza Massey, Dinah Tuffrey and Keziah Parker. But a number of other groups, such as the Ladies Circle and Townswomen's Guild, put on displays about various women that they had chosen, and the Church Heritage Group, mainly from the work of Gill King, did an astounding amount of research into women that the public had nominated for inclusion.

Some of the other women mentioned included: Joan Alix (first female churchwarden at St Edburg's), Catherine Bearder (manager of the Citizen's Advice Bureau), Joan Blackman (three times Mayor of Bicester), Mary Brydon (member of Launton Historical Society), Mary, Viscountess Chetwynd, Margaret Coker, Egeline de Courtney (co-founder of Bicester Priory), Gwendoline Dannatt (historian), Lilian Davies (first female chair of Bicester UDC), Florence

Dealey, Lorna England (fund raiser), Doris Goble, Elizabeth Gold (fund raiser), Carole Haveron (first female chief at Bicester police station), Mary Hombersley (WW1 nurse), Annie Hunt & Edith Vincent (owners of the Wool Shop in the 1960s), Maggie James (Guides leader), Sarah, Countess of Jersey, Esme Jones MBE (Guides leader), Dorothy Keaveny (founder of Bicester Drama Society), Rosemary MacLeod (doctor), Sarah Mansell (workhouse matron), Dorothy Mountain (pharmacist), Pam O'Keefe (missionary), Jean Orr-Ewing (co-developer of Penicillin), Val Pearce (chair of Bicester Twinning Association), Peggy Penfold (teacher), Wendy Reeves (treasurer of Bicester Widows Club), Pam Roberts (wildlife campaigner), Lou Scott-Joynt (founder of Mothers' Union group), Rita Taylor (co-founder of Bicester Theatre Club), Flora Thompson (author), Susanna Tubb, Pat Tucker (member of Launton Historical Society), Ruth Williams (teacher), Hilda Wright (St John's Ambulance superintendent), as well as many others.

- Matthew Hathaway



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Dates For Your Diary

- AGM & Extraordinary Women Talk**
17th September - 7:30pm
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- Aynho Village Walk**
23rd September
- October Newsletter Submissions Deadline**
28th September
- Family History Fair**
6th October
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AVAILABLE NOW!

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



29th September 1882

WEDDING FESTIVITIES AT BICESTER - To commemorate the recent marriage of Capt. Lewis Edmund Coker R.A., the owner of a large estate in this district, and a name most familiar to the past and present generation of Bicester people, a tea was arranged to be given in the grounds of Bicester House, by the kind permission of Henry Tubb Esq, to the cottage and allotment tenants, with their families, on this estate.

The invited guests began to arrive about half-past two when they were welcomed by Mrs F.J. Myers, Mr and Mrs Henry Tubb, the Misses Myers and Miss Stratton. The vicar was also present.

Games were immediately commenced. There was cricket, quoits, swings, and a variety of races were arranged, the winners receiving very useful prizes. First the little ones (in many instances very little ones indeed) were selected for a handicap race; then the men, and afterwards the elder women, contended for the mastery in a one hundred yards race, and right earnestly they entered into the sport.

At 4 o'clock the whole company, numbering nearly 100, sat down to a most excellent tea, provided in a large tent near the lawn, their wants being most assiduously attended to by the ladies we mentioned above.

After the repast games were renewed, and carried on, if possible, with an even greater alacrity, than before. The women commenced cricket, and many a hearty laugh was caused by the extraordinary "hits" they made and the superior bowling exhibited. This was most amusing to the elderly portion of the company. Tugs-of-war were arranged, and heavy tugs they were too, there was also some good jumping. A balloon was successfully started during the afternoon.

As the shades of evening began to appear the large tent was lighted up. Beer and tobacco was served out to the men, the women (those who used it) were regaled also with something to tickle the nose, whilst to the strains of the Bicester Volunteer Band the younger portion "tripped it lightly" for an hour or two.

About 7 o'clock Mr Henry Tubb stepped forward and called for three cheers for Capt. and Mrs Coker, and we can assure our readers the call was not in vain. They were given right heartily; and the same ovation was accorded to Mr and Mrs Tubb, and Mr and Mrs Myers. Thus ended a very pleasant afternoon to celebrate the nuptials between Capt. Coker and Mrs Frances Gertrude Tobin, and we sincerely trust that the good feeling exhibited may be continued for many years.

We cannot conclude without mentioning that Capt. Coker bore the entire expense of this undertaking and further expressed the hope that the afternoon might be one of thorough enjoyment. During the proceedings Mr and Mrs Tubb were most indefatigable in their endeavours to find amusement for the guests, and right well they accomplished the task. The company, it could be seen, appreciated the effort. Mr Phillips too, of the Angel Inn, who was entrusted with the catering on the occasion, merits a word of praise for the admirable manner in which he carried out the arrangements entrusted to him.

4th September 1908

SHELLOW HABITATION OF THE PRIMROSE LEAGUE - The annual gathering of the members of the Shellow Habitation of the Primrose League was held yesterday afternoon, in Shellow Park, through the kind invitation of Mr and Mrs E. Slater-Harrison (Ruling Councillor and Dame President).

The weather left much to be desired, rain falling in torrents most of the afternoon, but despite this fact a large number assembled in the barn in the orchard, where an excellent tea was provided at a moderate charge. The room was gaily decorated with flags and bunting, the walls being adorned with various patriotic mottoes, such as "God save the King", "The Army for ever" and "The Navy for ever".

In addition to Mr and Mrs Harrison were noticed Mr A. St. G. Hamersley KC (prospective Unionist candidate), Mrs Hamersley, Mr Thomas Armstrong, Major Sanderson, Miss Brown and Miss Beatrice Cartwright (members of the house party).

The whole of the arrangements were in the hands of a committee composed of the Wardens of the Habitation, and, but for the inclement state of the weather, would have been a greater success than it was. Grace was said before and after meat by the Rev. A. St. Q. Armstrong, and after the tables had been cleared the annual business meeting was then held, a platform being erected in the centre of the room.

The secretary read her report, and stated that the number of members is 331 and the financial position is also good. The Bicester Habitation can boast over 600 members and the Stratton Audley Branch is also in a flourishing condition.

One cannot help thinking what a great work for Unionism could be done by these habitations if well organised, and each individual member put his or her shoulder to the wheel and determined to leave no stone unturned until Mr Hamersley is returned to Parliament; and when he is there be equally determined to keep him there.

There are always plenty willing to join these organisations, but the Primrose League, if it is to be a success, must consist of earnest and active politicians who are ready and willing to work for the good of the nation and Empire at large. It is of no use people saying that the Unionists will sweep the country at the next election, we must remember the Liberals have an enormous majority, and it is only by means of persistent spade work now that the Unionists will be able to better their position at the polls.

The winter months are coming on, and it would be a good idea if the three habitations could arrange meetings in each village in their districts, and educate the people on current political questions. We have a candidate who will work, and it will be a thousand pities if, when the election comes round, he finds himself at the bottom of the poll because his supporters were over confident, leaving the work of organising the constituency till the last moment.

9th September 1932

VOLPRE'S CIRCUS - There was a large audience in St. Edburg's Hall last night to see Volpre's Indoor Circus, and the performance was thoroughly enjoyed.

A great deal of fun was mingled with the turns given by keen and eager terriers and Shetland ponies in a ring 18ft in diameter fixed to the centre of the floor. Many thrills were introduced, and a pony which told the numbers called by members of the audience was a little uncanny. Jockey riding, waltzing, singing by the dogs, and clever acts by the ponies entertained the company throughout.

Mr and Mrs Volpre are staying in the district for a time and will give further performances at Launton, Chesterton and elsewhere. The circus comes direct from Marlborough House and is certainly worth a visit.

13th September 1957

FULL SEASON TO KICK OFF WITH A CONCERT - Bicester Methodist Church Community Centre, formed earlier this year, begins its first full autumn and winter season with a concert in the new hall in Victoria Road on Saturday, September 28th.

The Community Centre, which already has a

membership of 50, is open to all members of the public in the Bicester district. The aim is to bring people of all ages together, to provide indoor games and activities, and to promote a better community spirit.

Weekly activities at the centre during the autumn and winter will include a discussion group, badminton, table tennis and dancing. Each month there will be a documentary film show.

The annual subscription is 2s 6d. Evening fee for adults is 1s, children 6d. No charge is made for old-age pensioners. Meetings are every Thursday, beginning October 3rd.

The Methodist minister in Bicester, Rev. Arthur Valle, is president of the centre. Mr Colin Egan is chairman, and Mr Sidney Wells, of 16 Cherwell Close, King's End, is secretary.

For the concert and social evening on September 28th, the artists taking part include Mr Michael Trinder (organist), the Rev. Denham Martin (conjurer), the choir of St John's Royal Latin School, Buckingham, Miss Pat Trinder (singer), Miss C. Watts, and the swing group of the Red Rhythmic Harmonica Band. Mr Vick Redfern will be comper and master of ceremonies.

Chesterton Village Walk



Chesterton Lodge, now the home of Bruern Abbey School

On the 9th September we set out on our guided walk around Chesterton.

Led by Bob Hessian we learnt about Chesterton Lodge, built by Henry Tubb in 1890, the school and village hall, both built in the 1850s under the instruction of Sarah Villiers, Countess of Jersey, as well as many of the listed buildings, cottages and farms that make up the history of the village.

Once again we had great weather for the day and ended it with a delicious tea.

We still have one more outing to go, visiting Aynho on Sunday 23rd September.

- Matthew Hathaway



Roll of Honour

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

Private William James Grace, of Bicester.

Died: 1st September 1918 Aged: 18 Served in: Devonshire Regiment

Private Cyril Morgan Hawtin, of Bicester.

Died: 1st September 1918 Aged: 24 Served in: Duke of Wellington's Regiment

Lance Corporal Ernest Frank Taylor, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 10th September 1918 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private George Frederick Austin, of Chesterton.

Died: 14th September 1918 Aged: 19 Served in: Wiltshire Regiment

Corporal Ralph Edwards Simmonds, of Bicester.

Died: 14th September 1918 Aged: 33 Served in: Royal Berkshire Regiment

Major Octavius Edward Fane, of Bicester House.

Died: 18th September 1918 Aged: 31 Served in: Royal Garrison Artillery

Private Herbert Percy Powell, of Bicester.

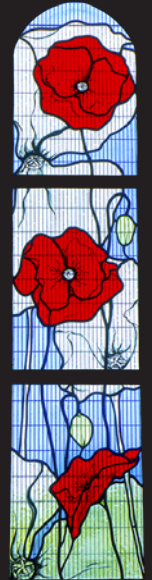
Died: 26th September 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: King's Royal Rifle Corps

Private Edward John Busby, of Launton.

Died: 28th September 1918 Aged: 20 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Frank Simmonds, of Kirtlington.

Died: 30th September 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Argyll and Southern Highlanders



Our Boys 1914-1918 by Julie Ann Godson

In the spring of 2018, with the World War I Armistice commemorations fast approaching, I began researching the 48 names on the war memorials in the villages of the Lower Windrush valley in Oxfordshire. My interest was in the lives of these men before war took them away from their homes and families, rather than in the military side of things. I wanted to explore rural society in our area through the prism of these solemn lists. And I was not disappointed. From the workhouse boy who became an early submariner to the officer who proved to be not quite a gentleman, all of life is here.

One of many preconceptions quickly overturned was that the men going from the countryside were all wide-eyed ploughboys who had never left the village before. Family connections as far afield as Islip, Charlton-on-Otmoor, and Wootton by Woodstock show that people moved about the county and beyond, especially following paid work. And this is what connected a Standlake family with the well-known Honours of Charlton-on-Otmoor.

James T Johnson, known in the family as 'Thomas', was born in Standlake in December 1888, the youngest surviving child of five, and with four sisters. His eldest sister Annie struck out into the world and went into service in Bethnal Green. There she met and married a Viennese waiter called Jacques John Saxl, known as 'John'. In the spring of 1911 John was evidently away,



Bay Tree Cottage

because Annie and her tribe of six children – aged from 12 years down to a babe-in-arms – descended on the Johnson family home at Bay Tree Cottage. Twenty-three year-old Thomas promptly made his exit.

Escaping the chaos at home, Thomas headed for Charlton-on-Otmoor where he stayed with a branch of the Honours, a well-established farming family, in their home at Box Villa. Head of the household James Honour was a 'hayter', or hay-binder and dealer. Animals needed feeding all year round, and the new railway station a mile north of the village would have enabled Mr Honour

to despatch fodder to a capital city powered largely by horses.

But Thomas's connection with the Honours was through another member of the household. James Honour's daughter Elsie was married to a Standlake carpenter named Herbert Brunker, evidently an acquaintance of Thomas's. Thomas himself did not follow his father's trade of carpentry; he worked as a painter. Insufficient work in a country village would oblige tradesmen like Thomas to travel the country seeking employment, and this may be another reason for the visit to Charlton-on-Otmoor.

However, an added attraction in the Honour household was Elsie's elder sister, Fencott-born dressmaker Florence Honour. Two years after the 1911 visit, Thomas carried Florence off to Standlake where the couple married in March 1913. Florence gave birth to a daughter named Lilian Bessie in May 1914, but soon afterwards the young couple's plans for a life and family together were interrupted by international events beyond their control.

Thomas's service number suggests that he may have joined up with the Ox & Bucks Light Infantry in the early days of the war. The battalions of the Ox & Bucks on the



Box Villa

Western Front saw extensive service during the Battle of the Somme (1st July–18th November), suffering heavily. On 28th July 1916 the 2nd Ox & Bucks moved to front-line trenches near Waterlot Farm and sustained heavy casualties at the battle there on 30th July. James Thomas Johnson was killed in action on 30th July 1916, aged 28.

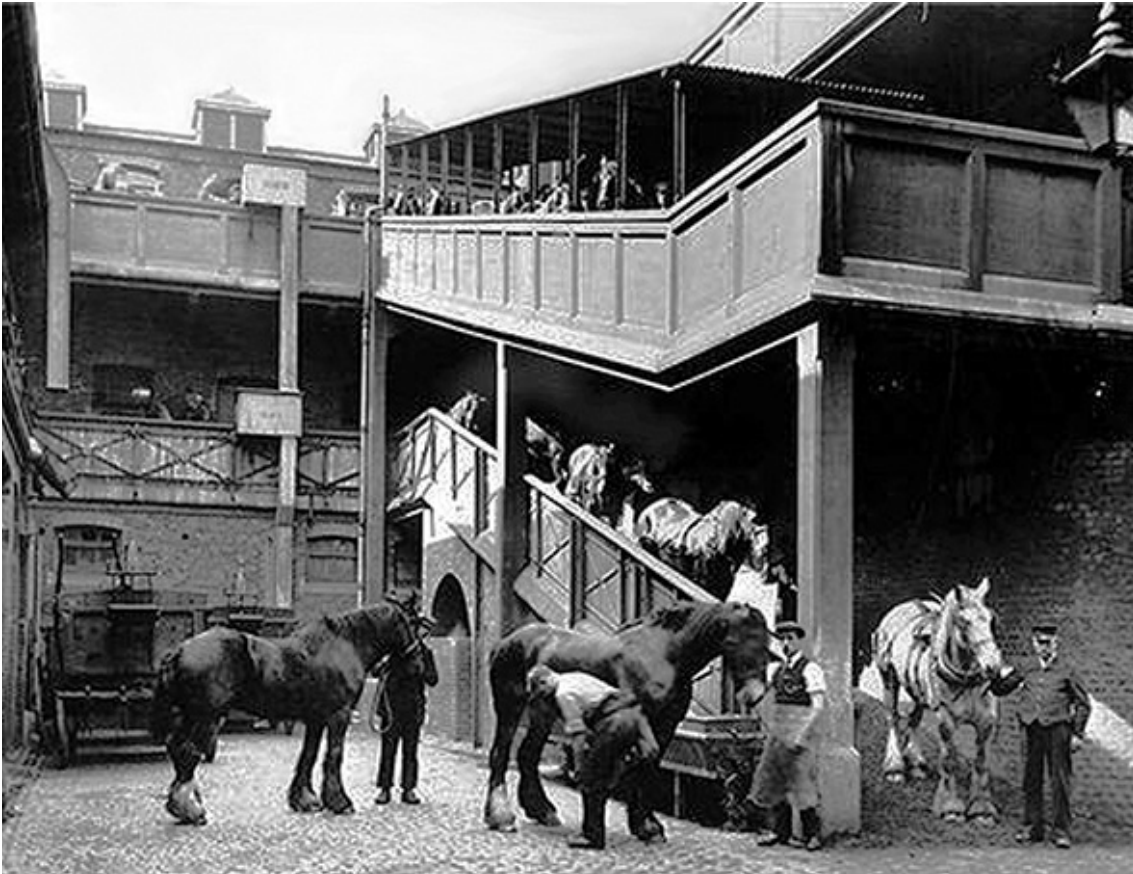
Thomas's wife Florence appears to have returned to her own family in Charlton-on-Otmoor, presumably taking little Lilian with her. Members of the Honour family still live in the village today.

I feel I almost know personally the men I researched; the loss of their lives was a tragedy which words cannot sum up. If only every parish in the land could research

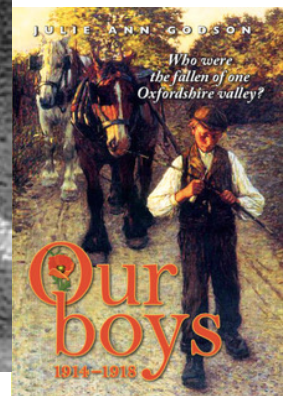
the names on its own World War I memorial, we might approach a full record of a lost generation. Wouldn't that be a fitting tribute?

- Julie Ann Godson

"Our Boys 1914–1918: who were the fallen of one Oxfordshire valley?" by Julie Ann Godson, £10.99, Amazon.



Stabling in London



Talks Update

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

Monday 17th September

Our AGM is followed by a talk by Bob Hessian on **The Extraordinary Women of Bicester.**

Monday 15th October

Mark Davies tells us about **“The Bicester Gang” and Other Stories of Oxford Castle.**

Monday 19th November

Stephen Barker comes to talk us through **Oxfordshire in 50 Objects.**

Upcoming Events



Oxfordshire FHS Family History Fair

Saturday 6th October 2018

10am – 4pm

Free entry, free parking

Marlborough School, Woodstock, OX20 1LP

Wheelchair and child friendly

Get help with your research – particularly in Oxfordshire but also in other counties

*A variety of subject experts will be present
Browse and buy books, CDs, maps, postcards and materials from specialist companies*

Refreshments available

A visitor last year said:

“A very enjoyable event with a wide range of societies present and practical help available. Would certainly recommend to other local /family historians“

Web: www.ofhs.org.uk/fair.html

email: fair@ofhs.org.uk

or call: Angie Trueman 01488 71714



St. Edburg's Church, Bicester

OPEN DAY

Saturday November 10th 2018

10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

“We will remember them”

1918

PAUSE, TAKE TIME TO THINK, TO
REFLECT and TO CONSIDER

2018

Some returned; many did not; find out about those Bicester men, their wives and families

St. Edburg's Heritage Group

Bicester Local History Society

Refreshments all day

A FREE EVENT

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