



Bombs Away!



Two unexploded 'historic ordnance' devices were found in Upper Heyford earlier this month, with the bomb disposal unit called to safely dispose of them.

One was discovered in rubble on the new housing estate off Camp Road on Tuesday 2nd April, then a second was found the following day.

The road was cordoned off and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team arrived to safely remove each device as they were discovered.

The site has been in military use since the First World War. Originally by the Royal Flying Corps, then the Royal Air

Force and the United States Air Force, until the base was closed in 1994.

It is not clear whether these devices were left behind by some extremely careless airmen or were dropped on the site by enemy aircraft. But they could have potentially been buried in the ground since the 1940s. It is quite a sobering thought when you consider all that has gone on there since then. Not only the recent building of the new housing estate, but also the many facilities and amenities constructed by the USAF.

- Matthew Hathaway



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Dates For Your Diary

Bicester Advertiser Local History Article	25th April
May Newsletter Submissions Deadline	3rd May
Archaeological Excavations Talk	20th May - 7:30pm see page 6
Bicester Advertiser Local History Article	23rd May
June Newsletter Submissions Deadline	31st May
Oxford Past & Present Talk	17th June - 7:30pm see page 6

7th April 1893

CONGREGATIONAL ANNIVERSARY

In connection with the 231st anniversary of the Congregational Chapel, a tea was held in the schoolroom on Good Friday, of which about 120 partook, their wants being attended to by Mrs Hewiett, Mrs French, Mrs Wrapson, Mr Sulston, Mrs Collins, Mrs Stanford, Mrs R. Stockley, Mrs G. Timberlake, Mrs Shouler, Mrs Scrivener, Miss Baker, Mrs Kirtland, Mrs Broad, assisted by several gentlemen.

In the evening a service was held in the chapel, when a very able sermon was delivered to a good congregation by the Rev. J.H. Tuckwell, of Thame.

A collection was made on behalf of church funds.

30th April 1926

MAJOR COKER'S GENEROUS OFFER

The annual meeting of the subscribers to the Bicester Nursing Home was held at the home on Wednesday, and was attended by the Rev. W. O'Reilly (in the chair), Mrs Tubb (president and Hon. Secretary) Mr W. Rant (Hon. Treasurer), Mrs C.J. Coggins (Assistant Secretary), Mrs Grimes, Mrs Mountain, Mrs Davey, Mrs O'Reilly, Mrs Lewis, Mrs Goss, Mrs T. Grimsley, Mrs Scott, Mr G. Layton, Mr W.E. Pankhurst, Mr W.J. French, Mr C. Ashmore, Mr R. Ashmore, Mr J.T. Mountain, Dr Long, Mr S.F. Smith.

The President read a letter from Major Coker asking if the Trustees would accept the site and grounds of the Home as a gift from him. This, he stated, would involve the cancellation of the present lease.

Major Coker had only two conditions to make and one was that the Home should continue as a home for, say, fifty years; and the second was that a small brass tablet should be erected in a reasonably prominent position inside the entrance. All legal costs on his side and the tablet would be born by him. It was decided to accept Major Coker's generous offer, and to leave the details to a sub-committee of three and the three officials; on the proposition of Mr R. Ashmore, seconded by Mr W.E. Pankhurst.

17th April 1959

HOSPITAL £4,700 EXTENSION OPENED

The hope that in the not too distant future Bicester Cottage Hospital would revert to being a general hospital as well as a maternity home was expressed by Mrs B. House, retiring chairman of the hospital's house committee, at the official opening of the new extension to the hospital last week.

The new extension, built by the Bicester firm of W.A. Price and Son Ltd., consists of a four-bed ward, night nursery and other accommodation. Before the proceedings began 3-year-old Katherine MacLeod, daughter of Dr and Mrs John MacLeod, presented bouquets to Mrs House and sister E. Lloyd, sister-in-charge of the Cottage Hospital.



Mrs House described the opening of the new extension as a great day in the history of the hospital. Before nationalisation the hospital, she said, was used for maternity and general hospital use. Now it was only a maternity home but she hoped that it would again become a general hospital in the not too distant future.

At the end of the proceedings Mrs House presented a gift to Mrs R. Price, wife of a director of W.A. Price and Son, and mother of the first baby born in the new extension.

After the ceremony, at which the Vicar, Rev. W.H. Trebble, conducted a short service of dedication, the visitors and guests inspected the new extension and were entertained to tea by the Cottage Hospital house committee.

2nd April 1993

PILL BOX MEMORIES

The death of Miss Dorothy Mountain has revived memories not only of her stalwart work for the Red Cross, but also of the town's last old-style chemist's shop.

For many years she ran Mountain's pharmacy in Sheep Street, founded by her father when he took over Sandiland's pharmacy in about 1902. Our old photograph (on next page) shows the imposing premises in the Sandiland's days in the 1890s.

In an interview with the Bicester Advertiser in 1982, Miss Mountain recalled that the pharmacy was founded by R.B. Sandiland in 1832.

"When my father Mr John (J.T.) Mountain came, it was in temporary ownership. My father was the son of a Lincolnshire farmer, but instead of following his father he became a qualified pharmacist. I don't think agriculture was doing too well at the end of the last century." Miss Mountain told us.

Her father trained at the Westminster College of Pharmacy, London, and was a pharmacist in the south of France for a while before running a chemist's shop at Caversham, Reading, before moving to Bicester.

Miss Mountain was one of four daughters and followed her father into pharmacy.



She did a seven year apprenticeship in his shop before take a course at the Pharmaceutical Society's School in London. She qualified in 1925 and went to a pharmacy in Pinner, Middlesex.

Miss Mountain went into partnership with her father in 1938. When he died the following year she carried on until she retired in 1963.

The pharmacy was one of those old fashioned establishments with a multitude of polished wooden drawers and large bottles. In the early days prescriptions were placed in white pill boxes and the lid was fixed with a drop of sealing wax melted over a gas burner.

After Miss Mountain's retirement the premises were demolished to make way for a supermarket. The site is now occupied by the Clinton's card and Dorothy Perkins lingerie shops.

In 1982 Bicester town councillors presented Miss Mountain with a plaque of the town's coat of arms in recognition of her Red Cross and other voluntary work in the town.

Marj's Memories Bicester Post Office



I remember well the General Post Office in Sheep Street, now "The Penny Black". The outside of the building has not changed much. But there were two machines on the wall where you could buy postage stamps. One for stamps value 2 1/2d (in old money) and the other for 1d stamps. Alongside were two large slots to put in whatever you were posting. Regular price for "tuppence ha'penny", but if unsealed cheaper;

postcards were 1d.

As you entered the large square room, to the right was one long counter with, possibly, five serving, all in a row. The Post Office was a very important place for the town and many transactions were done there: banking, posting, sending money, telegrams and more. One could buy savings stamps to stick in books, provided by the Post Office. When the book was full it was usual to buy a savings certificate for £5, which matured after 5 years.

In those days it was rare to have a telephone in the house so it was a regular thing to send telegrams, especially if a family member died, the Post Office telegram would be the way to send information to relations living away. A lot of telegrams were sent out during the war, regarding loss of family members fighting abroad. The telegrams were yellow, delivered by Telegram Boys on bicycles. The boys were smart in appearance wearing dark uniforms with pill-box hats. Delivery by Telegram Boys ended in 1982.

When the preparations were all in hand for the Coronation in 1953, I remember cycling through the town to ring, with other bell ringers, a quarter peal for the occasion, and as we passed the Post Office there was a large notice on the wall to say "Everest Conquered". What better place to give out good news? The quarter peal from the bells celebrated both events.

- Marjorie Dean MBE

Common Right to Private Property Talk

Deborah Hayter posed the question of how the ownership of land in the UK has moved from a landscape without boundaries at the time of the early farming tribes to the situation today where all land is owned by someone. The answer is enclosure in several guises.

Parliamentary enclosure dominated the period from 1750 to 1830, with remnants reaching into the twentieth century.

Common land is defined as land subject to the rights of other people to graze animals, collect wood or cut turf for fuel etc. 'Waste' is land not being ploughed for crops, such as meadows and woods. This also includes extensive area of moors, fells and heathland. The Lakeland Fells are the largest area of common grazing land. All common land has an owner, whether it is a local authority, the National Trust or a private individual.

Example rights of common are:

- Pasture. Right to pasture cattle, horses, sheep or other animals on the common land. The most widespread right.
- Piscary. Right to fish.
- Turbary. Right to take sods of turf for fuel.
- Common in the Soil. This is a general term used for rights to extract minerals such as sands, gravels, marl, walling stone and lime from common land.
- Mast or pannage. Right to turn out pigs for a period in autumn to eat mast (beech mast, acorns and other nuts).
- Estovers. Right to take sufficient wood for the commoner's house or holding; usually limited to smaller trees, bushes (such as gorse) and fallen branches.
- Ploughbote. Timber allowed to a tenant for repair of tools.
- Housebote. Wood allowed to a tenant for repair of the house.
- Firebote. An allowance of fuel.
- Common of Sere. Right to pick up dead or dry wood.

Much of the mediaeval common land of England was lost due to enclosure. Once enclosed, the uses of land listed above became restricted to the owner, and it ceased to be land for the use of commoners.

Only a small proportion of

what had been common land now remains:

1690s - 25%-30% (8-9 million acres of waste or common land)

Today - 1.3 million acres of commons in England & Wales (in 9000 separate units, including village greens)

Relicts of common rights include the right of property owners in the 'seven towns of Otmoor' to graze animals on the moor. Numbers of beasts may be restricted and this is known as a 'stint' of animals.

The Norman period, with its warm summers, saw more acreage under the plough and resultant ridge and furrow in the landscape. By the 14th century, however, summers were wetter and colder, and the black death devastated communities. There was less arable land and more pasture and, consequently, more enclosure to confine the animals. The 16th & 17th centuries saw enclosure for deer parks (emparkment) and a general shift from arable to pasture. At this time, there was also some enclosure by agreement between landowners to consolidate land into larger, more workable holdings. A 1604 map of Lower Heyford shows an early example of 125 acres worked as one unit, probably by a yeoman farmer who had profited under the open-field system and who would have been a major employer.

Parliamentary enclosure gave us a pattern of fields in sharp contrast to the existing layout. Regular fields were drawn on a map by a surveyor and straight hedges planted across the ridge and furrow of the open fields. Formally, tracks radiated out from the village, where farmhouses were situated, to the fields. After enclosure, farmhouses began to be built out in the fields. Post-enclosure roads were often straight (and are sometimes mistaken for Roman roads), of a standard width, including verges, and had hawthorn hedges planted each side. A 1635 map of Laxton, Notts, held at the Bodleian Library, shows the land held in yardlands (strips) and is the only place in the country where this ancient system is still maintained.

Landowners had to get a parliamentary bill before an enclosure award could be made,



because it involved customary law. The award included details of the allotments and a map. A qualityman was appointed to ensure that the distribution of land equated to its worth. Landowners had to pay a share of the fencing costs. This was overly burdensome for smallholders who often sold on their holdings soon after enclosure.

The whole of Oxfordshire was enclosure, whether in the early period or under parliamentary enclosure.

Despite the hardship caused to the poor, public opinion was in favour of enclosure as it was seen as the key to increasing agricultural output to meet the needs of a growing population. However, enclosure was viewed by the labouring classes as a land grab whose aim was to enrich those who were already prosperous. In many parts of Oxfordshire, as elsewhere, there were protests, the most notable in this area being the Otmoor 'Riots' of 1830.

Landowners whose common rights were lost were compensated with an allocation of land. This did not apply to farmers renting land. Enclosure had a serious effect on the diet and welfare of the poor.

One acre in six was taken by the church in lieu of tythes and it emerged as a major landowner. Many Victorian rectories were built on the profits of parliamentary enclosure.

A nursery rhyme from c. 1674 sums up the feelings of those disadvantaged under enclosure:

*They hang the man and flog the woman
That steal the goose from off the common,
But let the greater villain loose
That steals the common from the goose.
The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own,
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine.*

- Sally James

Gill King

As some of you may already know, fellow BLHS member and personal friend, Gill King, sadly died recently following a collapse at home.

She first joined the society back in 2007 and became a committee member in 2011 when she was asked to take on the role of archivist: a role she gave up a few years ago but was still partially involved in.

Her interest in local history started a long time further back though.

Originally born in Oxford, she moved to Bicester as a teenager in the late 1960s when her father took the job of Postmaster here. Always with an interest in religion, she studied theology at Oxford Brookes University. She went on to work in the Bodleian Library and other parts of Oxford University until her retirement at the beginning of this year.

In 1988 the Rector of St Edburg's Church, Fr. John Baggley, asked her to do some research on Wretchwick at the Bodleian. This led her to discover the works of local historians like White Kennett and John Dunkin, and immediately she was hooked. Her passion for local history was born.

She has worked on many projects over the years, mainly

focussed around Bicester Priory and St Edburg, her two main areas of interest. These included two booklets (shown below), one about St Edburg published in 1989 and one about the church and clergy in 1990. She also co-wrote a book, with David Buxton and myself, about the history of St Edburg's Church, which was published in 2010. Each of these was sold in aid of church funds.

She was also instrumental in the launch of this monthly newsletter. Taking inspiration from some of the many similar publications she received from other societies that she was a member of, thanks to her family tree research taking her to a number of places around the country. Without her ideas and assistance this would never have become the publication it is today.

One of her many current projects was a biography of John Dunkin, one of Bicester's more prominent local historians. She had been working on it for many years, but hopefully someone will be able to complete the work and we will one day see it published, as I'm sure she would have wanted.

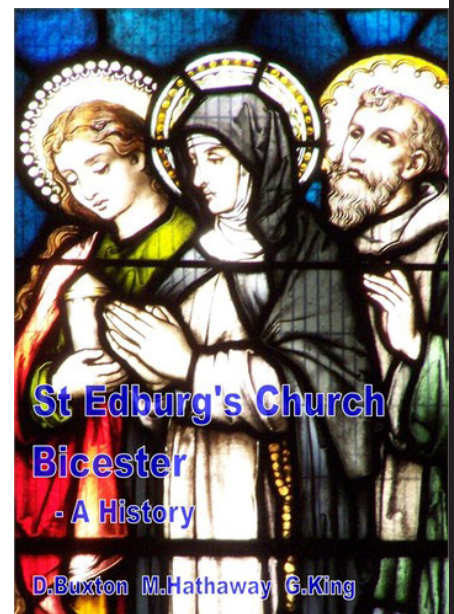
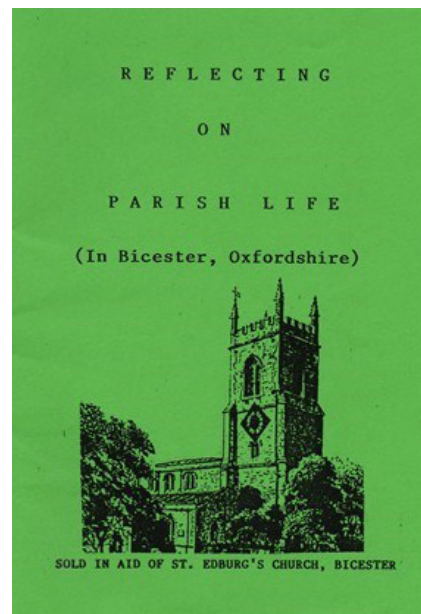
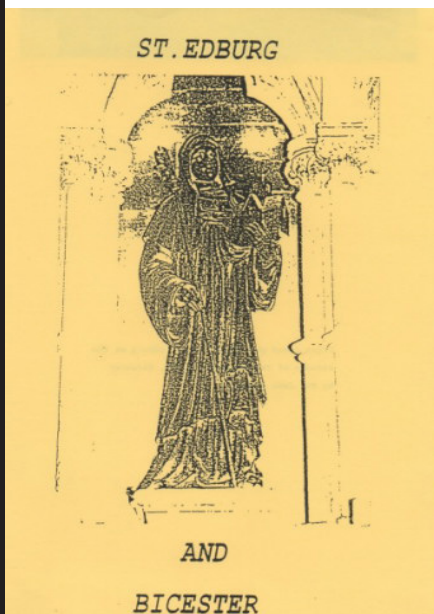
As well as her love for history, religion played a big part in her life. Through her church life she got involved with many groups and organisations over the



years, both locally and abroad. She spent many summers working with youth groups at St Edburg's Church, and her work with the charity ABCD (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability) touched many lives in Palestine and the West Bank.

She was a kind and supportive friend who will be sadly missed by a great many people.

- Matthew Hathaway



Talks Update

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

Monday 20th May

We learn about **Recent Archaeological Investigations in the Bicester Area** from Bob Hessian.

Monday 17th June

Janice Kinory explores old photos of the city in her **Oxford Past & Present** talk.

Monday 15th July

Julie Ann Godson comes to tell us about **Oxfordshire and the Norman Conquest** of 1066.

St Mary's Church, Launton



The Church Of The Assumption Of The Blessed Virgin Mary, in the parish of Launton, dates back to the 12th century. The original advowson, or patronage, was held by the newly founded Westminster Abbey long before the first church building was constructed.

The present structure consists of a nave, two aisles, a tower, a chancel and a porch. The tower at the west end was added in the late 12th

century, though it didn't get a full peal of bells until 1416. The weight of these weakened the tower and two flying buttresses were added in the 19th century to keep it upright. The chancel was originally an apse but was replaced in the 15th century by the present structure, at the same time that the porch was added.

The records of the church's clergy can be traced back as far as Simon de London who took the living in 1212.

We also know of a predecessor of his, Henry de Colewell, but no dates are known for him.

The most notable vicar of Launton was Rev. James Charles Blomfield, who held the living from 1850 to 1895. Whilst he was in Launton he devoted a lot of time to local history and wrote many books on the subject. Books that we are still using as reference material today.

- Matthew Hathaway



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