

# Out and About



Female wrestlers at St Giles' fair - 1909

As you may have seen from the recent notices sent out to members, we have arranged a guided walk around central Oxford with Liz Woolley for Saturday 28th September.

The walk focusses on leisure and recreation in Victorian and Edwardian Oxford. Some members may remember the talk she gave us on the same subject back in 2015.

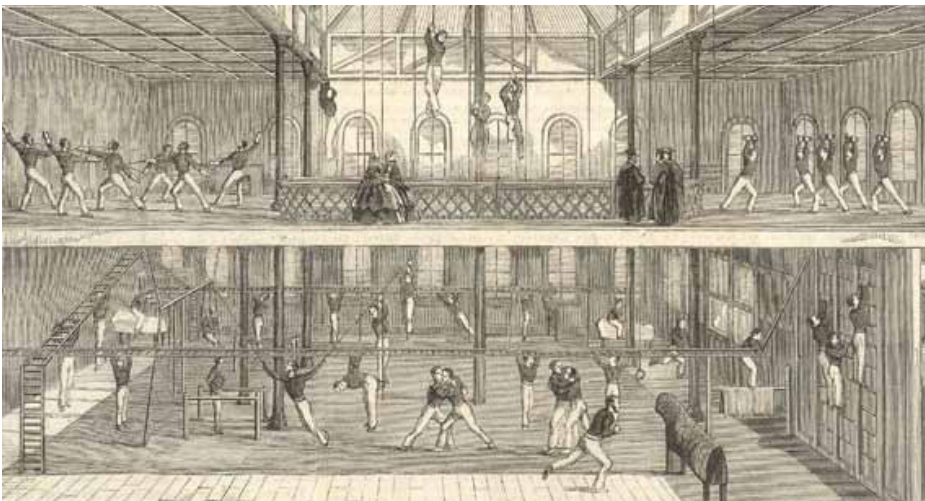
Discover how leisure activities grew in Victorian Oxford. Find out where the city's workers spent their free time and where reformers tried

to cure "habitual drunkards". Visit the pubs, museums, theatres and galleries where vice battled virtue.

The easy flat route covers 1 1/4 miles, starting from the Bear Inn, and we have arranged optional refreshments at the Quaker Meeting House in St Giles afterwards.

For further details or to book places please contact Sally James. Places are limited and the cost will be £6 for the walk and an additional £3 for the refreshments.

- Matthew Hathaway



Interior of the Oxford Gymnasium - Illustrated London News, November 1859

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## Dates For Your Diary

- August Newsletter
- Submissions Deadline  
*2nd August*
- Bicester Advertiser Local
- History Article  
*15th August*
- September Newsletter
- Submissions Deadline  
*30th August*
- Bicester Advertiser Local
- History Article  
*12th September*
- Annual General Meeting & Talk  
*16th September - 7:30pm*  
see page 3
- Oxford Walk  
*28th September*

## 21st July 1893

### INVITATION DANCE ON THE BOWLING GREEN

Mr J. Shepherd, of the King's Head, with consent of the Bowling Club, organized an invitation dance on the Bowling Green for Monday last.

An open-air dance properly arranged is almost a novelty in this district, for the simple reason that it is difficult to find a suitable place whereon to hold it. But Mr Shepherd, in taking the initiative in the matter, had at his disposal the neat and capacious green at the back of his house, which is both suitable and select.

During the long spell of hot weather an occasional dance of this description would have been welcomed by many, and the success of Mr Shepherd's efforts would undoubtedly have been more prominent had he thought of the venture at an earlier period. But it was no fault of his that a larger company was not secured, for the most elaborate arrangements had been made for the comfort of a goodly company.

It was anticipated there would have been a much larger number than did actually participate in the enjoyment afforded. But this diminution in numbers was to be entirely attributed to the somewhat heavy shower that fell about seven o'clock, which of course made the grass slightly damp and unnerved many who fully intended being present. However, between forty and fifty put in an appearance, and by half-past ten o'clock dancing was in full swing.

The green had been splendidly illuminated for the occasion with lamps and Chinese lanterns of various shades dotted here and there. With small coloured lights admirably arranged, the whole giving a very pleasing effect to the eye. In this direction nothing more effective could have possibly been arranged, for every part was well lighted and dancers were placed in no difficulty whatever.

On the left side of the entrance a retiring tent was situated, and next to that another small retiring place, succeeded by a tent specially erected for the supplying of refreshments, which were of course entrusted to Mr Shepherd. Messrs. Stevens' band was stationed in the wooden structure on the right hand side.

The dances comprised all the modern selections, and no fault could possibly be found in this direction. The pass-time was kept up till about five o'clock the following morning, when the company dispersed well satisfied with the pleasure afforded them.

## 30th July 1926

### SUGGESTED EVENING CLASSES

On Tuesday evening a public meeting, called by Mr J.L. Howson (headmaster of the County School), was held at the County School to consider the advisability of having evening classes at Bicester.

Mr G. Layton presided over an encouraging attendance of about 70. He said that instruction in various subjects

would be of advantage not only to the individual but to the community. There would be no difficulty in obtaining teachers, and they now had to get the requisite number of students.

Mr Howson explained the County Council scheme in detail, and answered many questions put to him. He spoke of the well equipped woodwork building and also the skilful teacher in woodwork in Mr F. Brown.

A show of hands was taken of those willing to become students, and resulted as follows: Woodwork 1, dressmaking 18, English 16, Commercial Arithmetic 8, French 18, general handwork 9, shorthand 7.

It was decided to form a committee primarily for the purpose of canvassing for students.

We are informed that classes will be started in the last week of September, or the first week of October, in the following subjects: French, English, Dressmaking, and general handwork. Classes will also be started in Carpentry, Commercial Arithmetic, and Shorthand, if, in addition to those who have already given in their names, more students are forthcoming.

## 24th July 1959

### NO JEANS, BY GEORGE...

Highfield School headmaster, Mr George W. Price, has declared war on the wearing of jeans - tight-fitting cotton cloth trousers - worn by some of the boys who attend his school.

Said Mr Price at the school's 7th annual speech and prize day on Tuesday: "We got rid of the luminous socks era, now we have to combat the jeans age. Smart-looking boys and girls at school counts for much."

He told parents on Tuesday: "Good dress enhances our pride and prestige."

Boys in other schools are smarter than some of the boys at Highfield. Said Mr Price: "During the year I have visited schools in Bedfordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and what I saw there was superior to what I see amongst too many of our own boys."

But with the exception of a few, the boys and girls at Highfield are well dressed.

Added Mr Price: "Yesterday, at Oxford, boys and girls received their County awards. I say without hesitation or fear of contradiction that in dress and demeanour no school in the County surpassed them and we were very proud of them.

"We have had compliments from strangers when they have been seen in public and on official visits.

"Even so, the hard core remains and I appeal to parents and children alike."

## 30th July 1993

RETAIL ESTATE PLAN "BAD NEWS FOR TOWN CENTRE"  
Shopkeepers in Bicester have expressed their disappointment that councillors are likely to give the go-ahead for a vast discount shopping development on the

edge of town.

Planning officers are recommending that Cherwell district councillors should give approval this week to the plan by Value Retail for over 40 shops with free parking for 670 cars on land behind Tesco's superstore off Oxford Road.

Mr Norman Oakey, secretary of Bicester and District Chamber of Commerce, said: "We are bitterly disappointed. We have been fighting this because we feel it will be another nail in the coffin of town-centre shops."

Shopkeepers fear the development could become a white elephant if few firms took units. If that happens then shopkeepers think that some national chain stores in the town centre would be attracted to move out to the Value Retail site, which had free parking.

Members of the Chamber and some councillors are to discuss the plan ahead of this week's meeting.

There is, however, some good news for town-centre

shop owners. If councillors do give the plan approval, Cherwell planners believe councillors should consider enhancing the town centre by looking again at creating pedestrian precincts in Market Square and the Causeway. They also suggest that town centre car parking charges might be changed to give either free or cheaper parking.

Planners also believe there should be a proper footpath between the Value Retail site and the town centre. The footpath would be across Pingle recreation field and either continue through Old Place Yard and the Causeway, or through Priory Lane and Chapel Street.

Cherwell's head of development and property services, Mr Alan Jones, says in a report to the planning committee that the impact of the development on town-centre shops would be tolerable. But it was admitted that it would be difficult to control the kind of shops in the development.

## Talks Update

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

### Monday 16th September

Our **AGM** and a talk by Bob Hessian. - Please submit items for the agenda or committee nominees by 30th August.

### Monday 21st October

Liz Woolley returns to tell us about Oxford's suburbs in her talk, **Oxford's Base and Brickish Skirt**.

### Monday 18th November

Everyone's favourite newsletter editor attempts to tell you all the story of **Bicester's Great War**.

**The Museums Resource Centre Open House**

**Sunday 6th October 2019**  
**10am - 4pm**

Free Admission • Guided Tours • Conservation  
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## Bicester, From a Brook The First Phase

This is the first in a series of articles that were originally published in the Bicester Advertiser in 1932. The subsequent articles will be printed over the coming months.

In his poem "The Brook" it may be recalled, Tennyson represents the stream as saying: "Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever."

Of the Bure - the Bicester brook - it may be said that men come and go, human dwellings are built and fall into decay, roads have been made and have actually disappeared, but the brook still pursues its winding way down from the high ground around Bainton hamlet.

It is proposed in a short series of articles to show, for the benefit of those who derive interest from a study of local history, how the town of Bicester originated from a few mounds of earth near its brook and gradually took shape from infancy, through an adolescent village period to its present formation as a town, and it will be seen how "the whirligig of time brings its revenges", as it were, in altering the general lay out of a place, whilst retaining some almost unnoticed details from which a clear picture can be drawn of the various stages of its growth.

It might be imagined that roads - which are strongly imprinted features in the plan of a locality - would, at all events in a town, where the use of them is constant and frequent day by day, take pretty much the same course through the years as in the beginning; but that this is not the case is demonstrated by the fact that Bicester's once principal street - which bore its plain, unpretentious name "The Street" - is now under grass and hidden from sight. The brook, however, is perpetual, and the course it took when it began as a stream largely determined the plan of the town which in course of time has risen on its banks and beyond them.

The origin of Bicester is simple in the extreme, and for reference to it we have to go back to the year 43 AD, that is to say almost nine hundred years ago - to a time of which no records are available to show that any human beings at all lived here; and it was a quiet, peaceful scene, just the brook flowing through the landscape, wild heath, and soulless woodland, where the bison roamed, and the wild horse, and a few stray beavers up from Berkshire, where they abounded.

That is not to say, however, that the foot of man never trod here until that date. History says that the Belgic branch of the Gauls, those warlike folk, who went on

expeditions east and west, were represented in this country by a tribe. While their Celtic brothers went east, the Belgic came west, - to Britain, and they were the Britons par excellence, roaming the countryside and owning this part of the territory, though they do not seem to have inhabited it.

Away to the east was the great forest of Bernwood, of which at least one oak remains near Kingswood, and there are possibly others in Wotton Park. On the north side (the present Buckingham way) was Whittlebury Forest, and on the west the massed formation of Wychwood, much of which still remains at Cornbury Park and Charlbury. To the south the rounded hump of Gravenhill, and the high elevation of Muswell Hill.

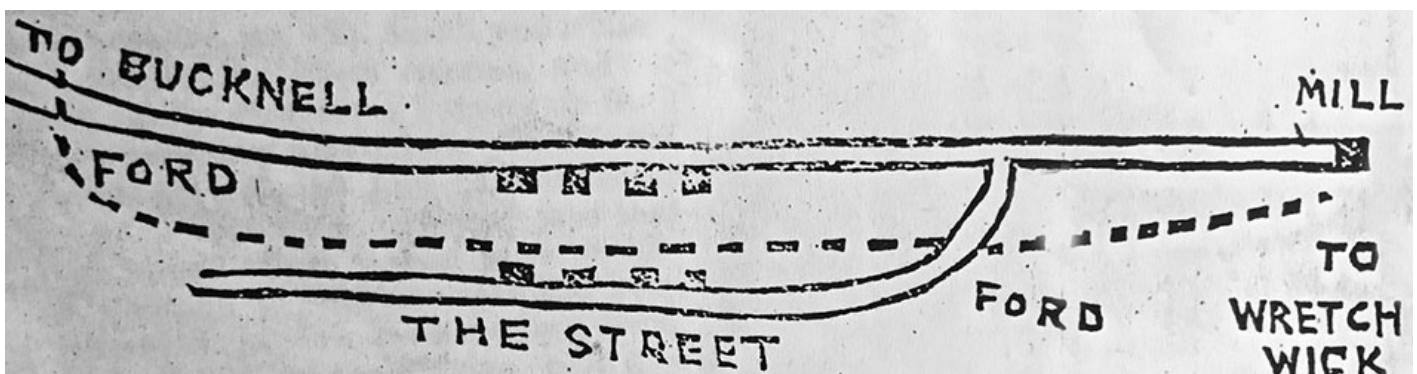
Now let us return to Bicester's brook. In 43 AD came the Romans and fought a battle near Caversfield. They raised earthworks and camped on the banks of the brook where is now "Crocwell". Then came a long silence - again the undisturbed peace broken only by the wolf's howl - for six hundred years.

Let us introduce ourselves to the West Saxons, who came, saw and conquered like the Romans of old and mark them especially, for it was they who began Bicester. Hither they came, tall and strong with blue eyes and fair hair.

They saw the old Roman mounds of earth at the brook and decided to settle here, which they did. They built huts (now Crocwell) and as they were bound to have a mill they erected one over the brook at a spot where the mill dam could best be made (now the "Priory" grounds), and it was a goodly sheet of water.

A glance at our sketch below shows the brook, as a dotted line, flowing to the south. The huts are on each side of the brook, and a trackway runs from them to the mill. Those folk on the further bank went along the track to the mill, whilst those on the west bank reached it by crossing the ford - stepping stones in the stream - either at the present beginning of the Causeway or some spot lower down.

Those were the only buildings then, huts and mill. A track leading to Buckenhulle passed over the brook on the north, and here was another ford - the "Auld Ford", the Saxons called it. No suggestion of Causeway then, or of Market Square or King's End, for this was the simple life! Causeway comes into existence in the next phase.



## Upper Heyford Heritage

The new RAF Upper Heyford Heritage Centre, located just off Camp Road, is now open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am to 4:00pm, and by appointment at other times. It is well worth a visit if you have any interest in the history of the base and its operations.

They also plan to try to keep the Centre open on tour days, and look at regular weekend opening. But they really need the help of volunteers and, the more volunteers there are, the more they can open the Heritage Centre.

If you are interested in helping please email them at [uhheritage@outlook.com](mailto:uhheritage@outlook.com), or drop in for a coffee and a chat.



## New Library Display



Following on from Martin Greenwood's very successful display on Flora Thompson, we have mounted a display on St Edburg, the patron saint of the Church of England parish church and of Bicester Priory.

St Edburg's Day is celebrated on the 18th July and the display went up to honour this and will remain in the library for the next few weeks.

We have included some information on the lady herself, as well as her shrine in Stanton Harcourt, her holy well in King's End, Bicester Priory, and a few of the places and institutions in Bicester that were named in her honour.

Please feel free to drop by and take a look.

- Matthew Hathaway

## Oxford Past & Present Talk

Dr Janice Kinory introduced the HEIR (Historic Environment Image Resource) project, which contains digitised historic photographic images from all over the world. The project has its origins in the need for the Institute of Archaeology to create more space in its premises in

Beaumont Street, Oxford. Numerous crates of lantern slides dating from the 1880s to the 1960s were discovered and these, together with glass plate negatives held in college, library, museum and departmental collections within the University of Oxford, form the core of the

resource of 25,000 images. New images are being added all the time, including collections from outside the University. These include 35mm slides from 1960s-1990s, currently awaiting digitising.

HEIR's mission is to keyword the images and re-photograph them in

their modern settings, so they can be used by researchers from a wide variety of disciplines to track changes to sites, monuments, landscapes and societies over time.

In the past, this material would have been used as an education tool and also serves to remind us of significant events. Janice showed a photograph of the re-erection of stones at Stonehenge in the 1960s: an event within the audience's lifetime that would be largely forgotten without the preserved image.

No images of Bicester exist within the collection, but Alchester features in excavations and maps from the 1920s and 30s.

A comparison of 'then & now' photos can help us to appreciate the purpose of a structure and how attitudes have changed over time. A photograph of the Martyrs' Memorial (right) shows a fence and bench in place until WW2. The bench gave viewers an opportunity to sit and

contemplate the martyrs' fate, but its removal changed people's ideas about the memorial's use.

A 19th century photograph of Carfax Tower (below) shows us that it was part of St Martin's Church, which was the city church up until 1896, when it was demolished to relieve traffic congestion. This photograph explains the siting of the tower, which would, otherwise, be regarded as rather incongruous.

Changes in transport can be tracked through the archive. A glimpse of a tram track in a photo of St Mary's Church in High Street can be dated from no later than 1914, as the need for horses in WW1 meant that the trams were replaced by motorbuses at that time.

The collection includes photographs of Victorian and Edwardian women riding bicycles, which was an unusual occurrence prior to Queen Victoria's adoption of a 4-wheeled 'bicycle'.



Evidence of flooding in and around Oxford is captured in a series of 19th photographs of Botley Road, Abingdon Road and St Thomas Street. Aerial photos from 1929 and 1947 show the extent of the devastation. A mystery remains – why are only men photographed here?

Janice took us on a pictorial tour of the centre of Oxford, noting architectural details and changes. She used clues, such as clothing, transport, known dates of buildings and a technique called relative dating (sequencing), to attribute an approximate date where this was unknown.

Photographs are free to download from the website <http://heir.arch.ox.ac.uk> and can be used for presentations and publication, providing they are credited.

Janice will be giving a talk as part of the Oxford Science & Ideas Festival at the Wig & Pen in George Street on 21 October 2019. Details here in due course: <https://if-oxford.com/home-2/>

- Sally James



## Committee & Contacts

### Editor:

Matthew Hathaway  
[editor@blhs.org.uk](mailto:editor@blhs.org.uk)

### Website:

[www.blhs.org.uk](http://www.blhs.org.uk)

### Committee Members:

Bob Hessian (*Chairman*)  
[chairman@blhs.org.uk](mailto:chairman@blhs.org.uk)  
01869 350662  
Sally James (*Treasurer*)  
01869 243804  
Sally Dexter (*Minutes Secretary*)  
John Roberts (*Membership Officer*)  
Matthew Hathaway  
Peter Crook

### Meetings Address:

The Clifton Centre  
Ashdene Road  
Bicester  
OX26 2BH

### Postal Address:

BLHS c/o Sally James  
14 George Street  
Bicester  
OX26 2EG