



Bicester in the 1870s

You may have read recently in the Bicester Advertiser an article about the recollections of Fred Hudson, as presented to the Bicester History Circle in March 1957. What follows is the full recollections as originally presented:

There is an old Latin tag which says "times change and we change with them" and looking back after a fairly long life one must come to the conclusion that the proverb is not far wrong.

Looking back into one's boyhood, between 70 and 80 years ago, one has to say that not only the "times" have changed but the habits, customs, and even occupations have altered radically during that time. At any rate, it is so with our own little market town of Bicester.

Let's take a glance at an ordinary working day, say in the 1870s.

The first sign of life would show itself between 2am and 3am by the patter on the pavements of the various journeymen bakers going to their respective places of work to "set sponge" as it was called, in readiness for the baking of the people's bread for the day.

Silence in the streets then till 5am, which would be broken by the passing of the horse feeders of the various industrial firms; so that the horses might have breakfast and be ready for the day's work before them.

At 6am the streets are alive with hundreds of pattering feet going to the scene of their labours.

Watch this crowd. It is interesting. Notice how a good sprinkling of them are carrying on their arms an empty tin can. What good you'd think was an empty can to a man going to his day's work? We'll get the answer later on. Here it is also interesting to note that although the style of men's clothing has altered little since then, the headgear of some of the various trades was quite distinctive. Stonemasons, bricklayers, painters and similar trades all sported the hard felt hat known as the "Billycock". Other workers were distinguishable by a soft felt hat. But about this time the tweed cap made its appearance and was soon

adopted as general headgear.

On Sundays all and sundry came out resplendent in the tall hat (such as is seen among the upper classes in the city today). This was termed a "Boxey" hat.

From 6 o'clock till 8 or 8:30 could be heard in various directions the cry of "Milk my dears". Yes the fresh morning milk for breakfast. But not now. A siren has sounded at 6am to call the first workers. It sounded again at 8, 9, 11, 1, 2, and 4. Locally called "The Hooter".

From 6 till about 7 the streets presented what today would be called a horsey appearance. The hunting stables, of which there were many, sent out their inmates, both horse and man, to do their exercises in order to keep fit for the winter hunting.

Shortly before 8 o'clock began what may be called the normal work of the day. Errand boys hurrying along to their place of work; shop assistants following in their wake; all intent on one thing, namely to get the business premises open by the time of the 8am hooter.

Servant maids too were in evidence along the whole route, with pails of hot water and "Hearthstone" to cleanse and whiten the doorsteps and with black-lead brushes to polish up the boot scrapers.

Punctually at 8 o'clock window shutters came clattering down and the shops of the town were open for business, not to close again until 8pm (Saturdays 9pm). No closing for meal times and no early closing day.

Very soon now the streets of the town wore an animated appearance. Children going to school - the girls with skipping ropes or hoops; the boys with hoops, peg tops or marbles according to the season of the year. This was before the advent of motor traffic and so safe was the middle of the road that the sidepaths were left for the use of the adult population while the younger generation almost monopolise the centre of the road.

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April Newsletter Submissions Deadline

30th March

Charles Dickens Talk

16th April - 7:30pm
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AVAILABLE NOW!

Our new DVD, **Bicester's Buildings**, is on sale now.

See the website for more details.



31st March 1882

HOT OFF THE PRESS - The first part of a most important contribution to the local history of this neighbourhood has just been issued from the press. As some of our readers may be aware, the Rev. J.C. Blomfield, rector of Launton, has long been engaged in looking up materials for the compilation of a history of that portion of Oxfordshire, ecclesiastically known as the Deanery of Bicester - an area over which Mr Blomfield ably presides as Rural Dean.

Judging from the first part of Mr Blomfield's work, which contains the early history of the deanery, no local history of the neighbourhood of so great importance has appeared since the year 1695, when White Kennett published his Parochial Antiquities.

Dunkin's History of the Bullingdon and Ploughley Hundreds, in two volumes, containing accounts of about twenty parishes, was a valuable contribution to local history both as regards its letterpress and the number of valuable engravings which the volumes contain. But the industrious White Kennett, vicar of Ambrosden, and afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, may be styled the father of the local historians of Oxfordshire, every subsequent writer in the same path being, either directly or indirectly, deeply indebted to the vast mine of archaeological wealth stored up in the Parochial Antiquities.

To outsiders, if we may so term them, Kennett's volumes are dry reading, as indeed nearly all local histories are, but when the subject matter relates to those familiar streets and fields which one every day treads, and to those who for centuries before have trodden on them, a most kindly interest arises in the mind of the reader, and the labours of the local historian are then estimated at their true worth.

We hope the pages of Mr Blomfield's Bicester Deanery history may find readers in every village whose annals are concerned in it, as indeed, by some means or other, it should do in these days when the lands of nearly every village are well grounded in the chief facts of our national growth and constitution.

Before closing our remarks we should like to call attention to two items which seem, so far as we know, to need correction. We believe the stone on Otmoor is familiarly known as "Joseph's Stone", and not "Jacob's Stone". One of the oldest inhabitants of the village of Oddington, a few years since deceased, always gave it the former name, as did also the men engaged in the Ordinance Survey for the 25 inches scale map of the district. "Ploughley Hill", also, is not levelled. About a third portion of the original tumulus still remains, enclosed by a semicircular garden wall, somewhat in the fashion of a half moon.

These small details, however, are comparatively unimportant, and can be, if they are as we suppose, easily corrected; but it is surprising how errors of this kind are carried on from one to another when authors are not personally acquainted with every nook and corner of the district about which they write.

We wish Mr Blomfield every success in the laborious task which he has taken upon himself, and earnestly

look forward to the pleasure of having the next part for perusal.

6th March 1908

A SMASH - On Monday last a smash occurred at the premises of Hall's Oxford Brewery Ltd, in the Causeway.

The enormous traction engine, to which were attached several heavy trucks of beer, was turning into the gateway of the company when a horse attached to a van, belonging to Messrs. Palmer Bros, and which was waiting to pass, became frightened and turned round. A plough was in the van, and the handles of this were forced through the window of Bridge House, demolishing several panes of glass and part of the woodwork.

This is the first accident that has occurred in the Causeway through the engine, but the thoroughfare is too narrow and dangerous for such heavy traffic, which occupies the whole street when passing, as well as doing considerable injury to the roadway.

4th March 1932

BRITISH LEGION CHILDREN'S TREAT - Amidst a cacophony of chatter, clatter and gusts of laughter, children of members of the British Legion in Bicester were feted yesterday on a happy occasion in the Tun Room, and they had a merry time.

Flags had been hoisted on the walls, and there were electric lighting effects by the Wessex Company. Two long tables, flower decorated, had been laid out for the children, who numbered 160, and the pulling of crackers re-echoed after tea.

Major Coker (Chairman of the branch) came in from a meet of the hounds and cut the iced cake, and the children gave him three cheers.

A troupe of three - Mr Morley Smith as a Scotsman, Mr Joe Leach as a clown, and Mr Leslie Evans as a canny dog, caused roars of laughter with their patter and songs.

On leaving, each child was given an orange, bun and a toy.

15th March 1957

NEW ENGLISH ARCHERY RECORD - Mr C.G. Barbier, captain of Bicester Archery Club, set a new archery record in England while shooting on the club's range at Bicester House last month.

He became the first person in England to record a "perfect end", which, in archery terms, means that, at a distance of 80 yards, he placed six consecutive arrows into the innermost circle of the target.

The "bulls-eye", or "gold" as it is called by archers, is only nine inches in diameter. An idea of the difficulty of this achievement can thus be realised.

Mr Barbier's brilliant shooting has been recognised by the Grand National Archery Society, who have awarded him the coveted Six Gold badge in confirmation of the new English record.

The news of a "perfect end" is rare at 60 yards. In becoming the first archer in England to score six consecutive "golds" at 80 yards, Mr Barbier has brought a rare honour to Bicester Archery Club.

Mr Barbier, who lives at 13 The Oval, Highfield, has also played cricket and hockey for Bicester.

It was a picturesque scene, owing chiefly to the many and varied forms of attire of the youngsters. There were two elementary schools: the "big" for youths and the young girls, and the "little" for the infants. The girls going to the senior school were dressed mainly in print dresses with glimpses of red flannel petticoats showing as they ran. White pinafores with bibs were extensively worn, the whole being capped with a sun-bonnet of huge dimensions made of print material; being a replica of those worn by old women.

The boys were almost uniformly dressed in a tightfitting pair of knickerbockers, just covering the knee, and white stockings and laced boots well covering above the ankles. The headgear was a semi-stiff cloth cap with a cheese-cutter peak, similar to those worn by porters today.

The younger children presented a problem at a distance to tell to which sex they belonged. The boys were dressed exactly like the girls till they reached the age of five or six years. Only the headgear telling the sex. As with their older sisters, the girls sported a sun-bonnet, while the boys wore a kind of tam-o-shanter hat.

I may remark that these sun-bonnets were not confined to the poorer classes, but were extensively worn by all classes, colour and quality being the only difference.

Crinolines, or "hoops", were fast disappearing about this time, but some survived. I well remember my teacher at the infant school wore one of those ugly atrocities, I think, till the end of her days.

The children now safely in school and the men back at work from the breakfast interval, the streets were soon busy with morning shopping.

But, as soon as the shopping was over, the streets were soon quiet again. Between midday and 2pm the earlier scene was repeated, children and work people monopolising the streets going to and from their midday meal.

We can now pass on to the 6 o'clock exodus from work, and here we notice once more the numerous workers carrying the tin cans we saw in the morning. They are not hung loosely on the arm this time but held carefully in the hand. This tells you at a glance that these men were employed at the local brewery and were carrying their supper beer, allowed them by their employers.

The normal working day is over. Summer evenings saw most men, as now, working on their gardens and allotments and the streets given over once more to the older children with their various games. The younger ones no longer in evidence as 6 o'clock was the usual bedtime hour. In the winter evenings of course playing in the streets was no longer possible.

This was before the age of the cinema, and after tea it was a common sight to see the whole family - little ones excepted - gathered around the fire intent on some amusing or instructive games. Even innocent card games were indulged in, nuts or an orange being the reward for the winners. Alas the coming of other amusements - innocent in themselves - quite broke up the family life as it was then.

Sunday was a day apart. Work was not only put aside but was entirely forgotten. Even the Sunday dinner was cooked away from home. The various bakers of the town kept their ovens going and did quite a business in baking dinners taken to them by their weekday customers. One penny was the charge for each dish of food taken. Puddings, pies and the weekly joint all found their way to the bakers. It would be a site for the gods if in the present day they could see the procession of steaming and appetising food going along the streets at 1 o'clock on Sunday.

Places of worship were well attended, both mornings and evenings, and the Sunday schools were filled with children in

their "Sunday best". Round black sailor hats were the headgear for the girls and "Scotch caps" for the boys. Mothers kept a special shawl and bonnet for Sundays while fathers generally sported white waistcoat and top hat.

In the spring and summer the whole town seemed to turn out for a walk after evening service. Graven Hill Wood was the usual objective, or a walk round by the workhouse for those living in the north end of the town.

It must not be thought that by the foregoing account of the habits of the people that they lived a dull and drab existence. In addition to the annual fairs, etc, there were moments of fun and jollity, and good comradeship not often met with today.

Near the "Angel", at the north end of Sheep Street, was an open space between the roadway and two cottages standing back from the pathway. On Saturday evenings, and often on other evenings, a local worthy living near used to sally forth with a chair in one hand and a fiddle in the other. Then the fun began. Striking out a popular dance tune he soon had a good crowd about him and a jolly hour or two passed in music, laughter, and dancing. It was a case of "Merrily danced the Quaker's wife. Merrily danced the Quaker". But today, amid all the varieties of amusement, that old neighbourly spirit does not exist.

May Day brought a troupe of Morris dancers and a "Jack in the Green". These, in turn, visited every part of the town followed by big crowds of people. The newly born August Bank Holiday was a real holiday for all. Great crowds attended a local fete, at which the chief objectives were climbing the greasy pole and taking down the leg of mutton tied at the top. Many a good suit of clothes were spoilt in vain attempts to reach the prize. Also, for the youngsters, was eating treacle buns with their hands tied behind them. The buns were strung on a string and just as the hungry mouths were nearing the buns, the string was swung too and fro. Safe to say the children had more treacle on their faces and clothes than on their bread next morning at breakfast!

That same week came other important events, namely: the Bicester Feast, King's End Sheep Fair, and the Statutory Pleasure Fairs.

Bicester Feast Sunday has long since died out, but I well remember father taking us to the scene near The Fox Inn, in King's End. Seated on long wooden benches all dressed in white smock frocks, which was the usual dress for the older men on farm work, each man had a mug of beer beside him and a long churchwarden clay pipe. That was there one day in the year and their real idea of Bliss.

On August 5th King's End Sheep Fair was held and some thousands of sheep in pens lined both sides of the street reaching down almost to the Parish Church.

On the 5th and 6th also was held the Statutory Pleasure Fairs. Both the Market Place and Market Hill, as the two squares were then named, were crowded with stalls, shows, and other amusements. Wooden horses, swing boats, turning stalls, and the like. This two day fair was an event looked forward to from one year to the next.

The Michaelmas Fairs followed the same pattern. They occurred on the Friday preceding October 11th, and the two following Fridays. The second fair was used extensively for hiring farmworkers from Michaelmas one year till the same date in the following year, and in the meantime, no one left his employment for twelve months. Shepherds wishing to be hired wore a bit of wool in their buttonholes, carters a bit of whipcord, and cowmen a bit of cowhair. They stood in a row by the Red Lion and the farmers had to ask no questions as to the sort of work the men wanted. Happily, this relic of serfdom has long ceased.

But for real excitement the 5th of November took the palm. Bonfires were lighted at various parts of the street. I am sorry to say that so wild rose the spirits of some of the youths of the town that no property was sacred. At one shop in the Causeway even the shutters were torn down and added to the blaze! Extra police were drafted in from the district, even from Oxford, where they could hardly be spared owing to the town and gown riots there.

Barrels of tar were taken from the roadside, and after firing were rolled all along the streets with the aid of long polls. The police would concentrate on this and then from another part would start another lighted barrel. In the early evening children were taken out as a treat to see the fires; but later on, when it was scarcely safe to be abroad, they were hurriedly taken home and the parents were also glad to stay there.

Christmas was heralded by a string band going the rounds on Christmas Eve, and on Christmas morning the churches sent their choirs round hours before daylight with their "Christians awake, salute the happy morn". There was none of the present day carolling three weeks or so beforehand by small bands of children asking for pennies.

The services on Christmas morning were always popular. There were no evening services unless Christmas Day fell on a Sunday, the idea being that Christmas was recognised as a day for family reunion and home rejoicings, with Christmas presents hanging from the Christmas tree for the children.

Boxing Day was an outdoor day if the weather was at all kind. The Bicester hounds always met at the Windmill (now pulled down) near the crossroads on Middleton Road. All the world and his wife were at the meet long before the time advertised.

Another Christmas custom was carried out by the publicans of the town. Every person who entered the house for his or her half of "four ale" was presented with a portion of ham and bread to eat with it. This custom was so much abused by those thirsty mortals who went to one public house after another and got so besotted that they were not at all in one with the Christmas spirit of peace on Earth and goodwill towards their fellow men, that the custom was abolished.

The children were by no means forgotten on Boxing Day. The spacious courtyard at the rear of the red house on Market Square was crowded to capacity with children, three or four hundred of them. Then, punctually at a given time, a huge basket was brought along from the bank piled up with bright new pennies, and every child was presented with one. Oh! the delight to possess one of these shining discs. These were the gift of the local banker, Mr Henry Tubb, and he had a Christmas blessing from every recipient.



So much for the habits and customs of the people. But this account would not be complete without mention of the amenities that were enjoyed or otherwise.

Roads:

The roads through the town were, on fine sunny days, fairly passable. But in wet weather, and all the winter, were

deplorable. They were surfaced with soft local stone taken from adjacent quarries and quite unfitted for road use, even for the light traffic of those days.

These stones were deposited in heaps along the country roads and broken up into approximately 3 inch cubes. Then, about Michaelmas, they were carted and spread all over the surface of the road and, except for a short spell of rolling by a couple of men with a hand roller, were left to the mercy of the weather and the traffic. The result was that for some weeks loose stones were kicking about, and deep ruts made by the wheels of the traffic resembled a cart track along farmland.

After a wet spell in the autumn and the greater part of the winter, the street resembled a huge mud bath. The men employed by the local Board of Health, briefly referred to as the "Local Board", were at first employed in filling up the car tracks and later scraping up the resultant mud into heaps by the road; thus presenting a tempting jump to we youngsters, and the subsequent thrashing when we got home all plastered and nicely decorated.

Traffic:

There being no heavy industry in or around Bicester the Road traffic was of fairly light description. True, one saw heavily loaded farm wagons and timber carriages lumbering along sometimes, but for the most part it consisted chiefly of trade vans and light vehicles for easy transit; of course, all horse drawn.

The doctor would be recognised by his high gig, jogging along at about nine or ten miles an hour, although he sometimes had recourse to horseback, even in the town. I well remember a visit to myself by a doctor who got off his horse and told him not to move while he was in the house. True enough, he had only to go outside, mount his horse, and be off again.

Ladies were more suited by little governess cars, or more ornate broughams, drawn by ponies advertised as "quiet to ride or drive".

But the means of conveyance which attracted we youngsters was that used by a gentleman in the neighbourhood who rode in a "four in hand", and four lovely examples of horseflesh they certainly were. When this conveyance came along, the marbles and tops had to be scrambled up while we gaped with awe at the imposing sight. The other traffic drivers would be very accommodating and pull to the side of the road so as not to interfere with games.

On Tuesdays and Fridays the streets were very much busier, as on those days carriers from the neighbouring villages came in their covered carts bringing some passengers with them, and also orders from the villagers to the various shops. The Market Square was filled with these carts, and the shops were kept busy for some hours on those days executing the orders brought to them.

Friday was the market day, and the cattle market was held in the lower end of Sheep Street on alternate Fridays. Traffic through the main street of the town was suspended for some hours at this time.

Another feature on the Market Square was a cumbersome structure in the middle of the square. This was a weighing machine for the use of farmers and others with their loads of corn, straw, and other essentials. The machine itself was beneath the surface of the roadway, but a wooden timber frame was at least a foot or more above the surface, and was not only an eyesore but a nuisance to those using the square at night. It was owned by a syndicate and latterly was out of repair and is now removed.

Post Office:

One letter carrier was responsible for the delivery of mails for the town itself in those days. The parcel post was not in operation till the 1880s.

Police:

There was a resident superintendent for Bicester and district, and one constable served to keep order in the town.

Village History Stratton Audley

The village of Stratton Audley lies just over two miles north-east of Bicester.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records that Robert D'Oyly held five hides of land at Stratton. Like many of his manors, Stratton later became part of the Honour of Wallingford. The Honour of Wallingford became part of the Earldom of Cornwall and thence in the 15th century a number of former Wallingford manors became part of the Duke of Suffolk's Honour of Ewelme.

The Audley family became tenants of the manor by marriage in 1244 and had built a moated castle there by 1263. Stratton remained in the Audley family until Hugh Audley died in 1347, leaving the manor to his daughter Margaret, wife of Ralph de Stafford, 1st Earl of Stafford. The castle no longer survives, but its remains, now a scheduled ancient monument in the field to the south-east of the church, were excavated in 1870.

In 1431 the estate was settled to one of his descendants Humphrey, Earl of Stafford who was created 1st Duke of Buckingham "for eminent services to Henry VI". Humphrey died in 1460 commanding the Lancastrian army.

In 1461 Henry, 2nd Duke of Buckingham succeeded to the land. He materially helped towards establishing Richard III on the throne through his intrigues in June 1483 with the Lord Mayor and citizens of London, being implicated in the murder of the Princes in the Tower. He rebelled, was betrayed and beheaded in 1483. The estate was confiscated.

The Duke's son Edward had been under age at that time, but later found favour with Henry VIII and the estate was returned. However, he eventually fell out with the King who then granted Stratton to an earlier family branch member. After their death the estate was held by Trustees.

In 1551 the Borlase family inherited the village and although they lived in Marlow, they appear to have arranged for the building of the Manor House in the 16th Century.

In 1672 Sir John Borlase inherited and settled in the Manor House at Stratton Audley. His father had fought in the Civil Wars on the Royalist side, with the result that his estates were confiscated but later restored during the period of Parliament.

Sir John and his brother Baldwin are buried and commemorated in the Church, Sir John with the ornate baroque monument and Baldwin with a large plaque opposite the organ.

In 1763 Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren inherited the estate. He was a distinguished Naval Officer and took part in the Battle of the Nile. He ended his naval career as Admiral of the White and on retirement became an Ambassador to the Court of Russia.

The entire Parish remained in single ownership until it



St Mary & St Edburga's Church

was sold off in lots in an auction in 1890.

The present manor house was originally built in the 16th century. It was altered in the latter half of the 17th century and partly rebuilt in the 19th and 20th centuries. It continued to be owned by single families until the mid 1960s, when it was divided into apartments.

There was some enclosure of land in the parish in the 16th century, and by 1779 the enclosed land totalled 300 acres. Arable farming continued on an open field system until Parliament passed an inclosure act in 1780 to enable all Stratton Audley's open fields and common lands to be enclosed.

The parish church of Saint Mary and Saint Edburga dates from the 12th century, but was largely rebuilt in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Decorated Gothic bell tower was added late in the 14th century. The church has a Jacobean pulpit and elm table, the latter dated 1636. There is also an oak tower screen, which was made in the 20th century by the Oxford Diocesan Surveyor T. Lawrence Dale.

In 1552 the church had three bells plus a Sanctus bell. The bells were re-hung in 1636. Richard Keene of Woodstock cast the present third, fourth and fifth bells in 1693 and re-cast the Sanctus bell in about 1699. Henry III Bagley of Chacombe cast the tenor bell in 1721. Pack and Chapman of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry cast the treble bell in 1779, completing the present ring of five bells. The ring was re-hung in 1902 but part of the old 1636 frame was preserved in the church.

A school was opened in the village in 1808, supported by Sir John Borlase Warren, 1st Baronet, who provided a house and salary for the schoolmaster. New premises for the school were later opened in 1837. It was affiliated to the National Society for Promoting Religious Education. In 1929 it was reorganised as a junior school and senior pupils were transferred to the school at Fringford. It became a voluntary controlled school in 1951, but has since closed.

- Matthew Hathaway

Roll of Honour

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

Private Albert Edward Walton, native of Goddington.

Died: 16th March 1918 Aged: 34 Served in: Royal Fusiliers

Private Arthur James Bennett, of Fritwell.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 37 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private George Walter Coles, of Tinkers Lane, Bicester.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Private William James Dagley, of Stratton Audley.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 29 Served in: Leicestershire Regiment

Private Frederick James Harrup, of Fritwell.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 19 Served in: Machine Gun Corps

Private Arthur Hiron, of Bicester.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 31 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private William Arnold Lang, of Bicester.

Died: 21st March 1918 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Charles Thomas Marriott, of Fringford.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Edwin Thomas Price, of Oddington.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 33 Served in: Leicestershire Regiment

Private John Edward Stevens, of Stratton Audley.

Died: 21st March 1918 Aged: 22 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Albert Hughes, of Middleton Stoney.

Died: 22nd March 1918 Aged: 28 Served in: Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment

Private Reginald William White, of Fritwell.

Died: 22nd March 1918 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Private Percival Charles Bangs, of Bicester.

Died: 23rd March 1918 Aged: 26 Served in: Royal Army Medical Corps

Private Albert Henry Grace Boyles, of King's End, Bicester.

Died: 23rd March 1918 Aged: 22 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Private Christopher James Dale, of Upper Heyford.

Died: 23rd March 1918 Aged: 31 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Private John Massey, of Launton.

Died: 23rd March 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Sydney Peyton MC, of Stoke Lyne.

Died: 24th March 1918 Aged: 26 Served in: Rifle Brigade

Private G. Fred Rawlings, of Langford Cottages, Bicester.

Died: 25th March 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Grenadier Guards

Private George Freeman, of Launton.

Died: 27th March 1918 Aged: 25 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Private Vivian David Davies, of Buckingham Road, Bicester.

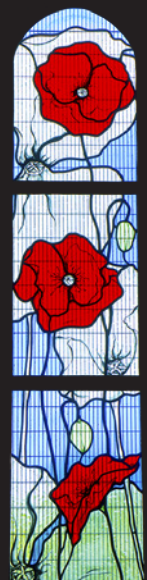
Died: 28th March 1918 Aged: 29 Served in: Durham Light Infantry

Captain Ralph Windsor Parker, native of Bicester.

Died: 28th March 1918 Aged: 27 Served in: Grenadier Guards

Private Sydney Hayward, of Kirtlington.

Died: 31st March 1918 Aged: 20 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars





Years ago Bicester had two cinemas: The Crown and The Regal. If we couldn't get in at The Crown we just walked on and went to The Regal.

The Crown Cinema was where Crown Walk is now. It was a hotel and cinema. The large wooden gates spanned across the entrance which is much wider now, with a cobbled walk-way in. In the late thirties, a very early memory of mine was of being taken there by my brother to see Walt Disney's "Dumbo". The young children crowded outside the big gates to see the Saturday matinee and, a smaller gate (within the large gate) would be opened and they pushed in to what was like the neck of a bottle, some falling over in

the excitement. My brother warned me that what I was going to see might make me cry (and it did).

Bicester seemed so safe in those days. Children didn't need to be taken by parents everywhere they went.

The manageress of the The Crown was a lady called Miss Tilt. During the war a triple murder took place in the hotel and people watching the films could hear the gun shots. A serviceman had entered the hotel and shot a Bicester woman and her lover, and then shot himself.

Sometime after that the cinema burnt down.

The Regal Cinema continued for many years, well into the seventies when it became a bingo

hall. Showing a big film and small film each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; a change of films for Thursday, Friday and Saturday and, on Sunday always older films that we had seen before. PATHE News was always shown and, during the war there were updates on the progress. "The King" was always played at the end of the performance and no-one ever moved, but stood to attention.

- Marjorie Dean MBE



Talks Update

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

Monday 19th March

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

Monday 16th April

Professor Greg Stores tells us about **Charles Dickens as 19th Century Social Reformer and Medical Observer.**

Monday 21st May

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

History of Oxford University Talk

Chris Day visited the society to tell us about the history of Oxford University in his talk, *The Home of Lost Causes & Forsaken Beliefs*.

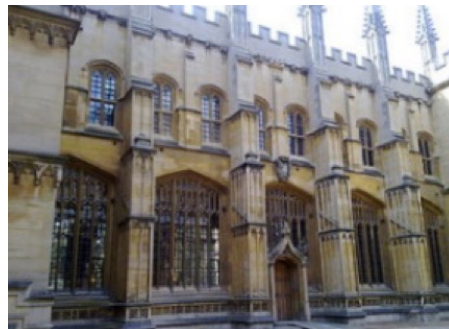
The university emerged slowly in the middle ages at a time when two models were established. The university in Bologna, founded in 1088, was run by the students, most of whom were lawyers. In Paris, the university was headed by teaching masters who, together with senior administrators, formed a parliament. Oxford was based on the Paris model. For the majority of its nine-hundred-year history the university has been private, only receiving government funding from the 20th century.

The oldest document in the university archives is an award of 1214 which gave the university privileges, a chancellor and administrators. At this time, the student body numbered approximately 1000 men.



Student accommodation was centred around High Street/King Edward Street. Teaching masters rented property, sub-let to students and gave lectures on the premises. From the 1250s hostels appeared accommodating a very small number of graduates in each. Colleges started approximately 150 years after the

university and became increasingly important. These were large, wealthy establishments housed in buildings set around a quadrangle that admitted under-graduates for the first time. They were set up by individuals such as William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, who founded New College in 1379. Historically, the university was relatively poor in contrast to the wealthy colleges. The university and colleges were, and remain, separate institutions with clearly demarcated roles. The university admits students, provides a central library and awards degrees. Up until the 1990s, the vice-chancellor of the university was the head of a college.



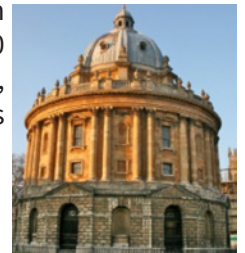
The Divinity Schools were erected by the university between 1427 and 1483 as a statement, although their construction was hampered by a lack of funds. By the 15th century Oxford had become a university town with a commercial element.

Christ Church College, built 1525-9, marked the beginning of expansion. The university had taken over the city centre – Sheldonian Theatre 1669, Old Ashmolean Museum 1683,

Clarendon Building 1713.

The university became a base for science with significant work taking place in the 17th century. However, by the 18th century the quality of teaching had declined, and many students were forced to resort to private tutoring. From 1581 to 1855 prospective students had to swear an oath to the Church of England. Non-conformist tended to succeed in industry, e.g. Rowntrees, Cadburys.

Despite falling admissions of new students, down from 400+ in 1610 to 180 in 1750, the university's building campaign continued (e.g. Radcliffe Camera). Money was being spent on buildings rather than education.



The 19th century saw the move to a modern university engaged in research. The Ashmolean Museum was the base for humanities research and the Museum of Natural History (built 1855-60) promoted the sciences, which drive the university now.

Female students were admitted to Lady Margaret Hall in 1879, although degrees were not awarded until 1920. Females now make up 50% of the student population.

As the oldest university in the English-speaking world, Oxford is a unique and historic institution which continues to thrive after nine hundred years.

- Sally James

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