

Bicester at war

This year sees the commemoration of 100 years since the start of the 1st World War and 75 years since the start of the 2nd World War. Both had a major effect on the town.



Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars in Market Square

War was declared on 4th August 1914. Mobilisation notices were immediately put on display in the Bicester Post Office windows and this drew large crowds to Market Square to read them. The Territorial Reserve was called up; even the Scouts were mobilised! With people fearing the worst, sugar prices doubled overnight. Regiments from the local Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars and the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry prepared for action.

The Ladies of Bicester met at St Edburg's Hall to produce clothing and bandages for the troops. Meetings were held in the Corn Exchange (situated behind the Crown Hotel), encouraging men to join Lord Kitchener's army. Many did and by the end of that year over 20 men had enlisted, the town's population was just over 3100 at that time.

In early September of 1914, there was news of the first local casualty Lt. C. Hoare of Bignell House, Chesterton; inevitably there were many more to follow. The Bicester Herald, would later publish a "Roll of Honour" listing all local men serving in the armed forces and whether they were missing, killed in action or imprisoned. By the end of the war the list extended to over 500 service men from the area.

World War 2

The British declared war on Nazi Germany on September 3rd 1939. The Bicester air raid siren sounded for the first time on 6th September 1939, just a few days after the first evacuees arrived at Bicester North station from London. More evacuees followed and the children, sometimes with their mothers, were billeted in the town and surrounding villages.

For Bicester the biggest impact on the town was from the military. RAF Bicester had already re-opened before the war started but there were other local airfields at Finmere, Upper Heyford and Weston on the Green, all of whom relied on local civilian as well as military personnel.

The construction of the Central Ordnance Depot at Arncott and Graven Hill from 1941 onwards brought thousands more personnel into the area and had a lasting influence on the development of the town and surrounding area. There was also a prisoner of war camp close by at Windmill Camp, Blackthorn who even issued their own 'local currency'. Mostly Italian prisoners, they helped build and maintain the Depot and worked on local farms. Many decided to stay in Bicester after the war and contribute to the economy of the area.

Bicester can be, and is, very proud of its association with the military and its heritage of community spirit; borne out in the town's war time history and the continual support of the military personnel and regiments that call Bicester home.



Bicester Red Cross Hospital Wounded 1915

BICESTER Roll of Honour	
Specially Compiled for the BICESTER HERALD	
Alcock Arthur, Private, "King's Head," 110 Hemmer, Now a prisoner at Gostew, Neudorf, Bozzy, Germany	Cole George W., Troop King's and, Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars
ALEXANDER William J., Lance Corporal, formerly of the Gulf House, Royal Army Medical Corps, Dressed on the "Royal Edward," August 15th	Cole William John, Private, from Buckingham Palace, London
Alley Alfred, Private, 21 North street, Goldstream Oxford	Coleman Thomas, Lance Co Hussars
Almond Alan, Staff Sergeant, formerly of the Police Station, Army Service Corps	Collins Herbert J., Troop Oxfordshire Hussars
Almond Joe, Private, formerly of the Police Station, Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry	Corrick Arthur, Sergeant, Oxon and Bucks Light I May 2nd, 1915
Aspl, Harry, Sergeant, 15 The Crossway, Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars	Coppen Walter John, C Oxfordshire Hussars
AVEREY Walter George, Corporal, 10 Bath terrace, 1st, Eastleigh, Eastford. Killed in action, October 15th, 1914	COTTELL, Rev. Father, Medical Corps of France Oxford
Ashmore Henry, Private, Lavendon road, 7th Border Regiment	Crawford Ernest, Corporal and Bucks Light Infan Oxon and Bucks Light I
Auger H. E. W., Private, Whitehall, Army Service Corps	CROOK George Douglas, Lt 2nd/4th Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry
Ayre James B., Driver, 27 Field street, Royal Regi- ment	Dagley Francis E., Private Oxford Corps
Ayre George L., Gunner, 23 Field street, Royal Gas Troop Artillery	Dagley Walter H., Private, Royal Engineers
Ayre Albert G., Private, 31 Field street, Motor Trans- port Section Army Service Corps	Danson William, Private, Bucks Light Infantry
Ayre Thomas, Corporal, 34 Field street, Kilde Redgate, Wounded in the high leap on May 2,	Danson Thomas, Private, 4 and Bucks Light Infan
Ayre Walter, Private, 34 Field street, 2nd/4th Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry	Davey William Cecil, C Oxfordshire Hussars
Ayre Edward, Private, 3 Albert place, Oxon & Bucks Light Infantry	Davis William Henry, T Hussars
Ayre Thomas, Private, late of Bicester, Yorks and Lancashire. Wounded	Dunn Joseph H., Private, and Bucks Light Infan
Ayre Thomas, Trooper, Woodfield, Queen's Own Ox- fordshire Hussars	Dunn James, Private, 2 & and Bucks Light Infan
BAGGOT Samuel, Sergeant, 29 King's end, Royal Bucks Regiment	Duffy James, Private, late Light Infantry, Now in Dumfriesshire
Baker Gilbert Edward, Lance-corporal, 3 Palmer's col- lages, City of London Regiment	Edwards Cyril George, 3 35 Priory road, Hill 8 September 5th, 1914
Baker Henry, Private, Priory road, 4th Oxon & Bucks Light Infantry	East George, Driver, 2 F Artillery
Bangs Robert, Corporal, formerly of Priory road, Motor Communications, Signal Section of Royal Engineers	East Arthur, Sergeant, 2 F Medical Corps
Bangs Percy, Private, formerly of Priory road, Royal Army Medical Corps	East Albert, Private, 3 Bucks Light Infantry
BARKER Arthur, Private, St. John's street, Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry. Killed in action, May 15th, 1915	East William, Corporal, Bucks Light Infantry
BARKLEER Charles, Private, St. John's street, Army Service Corps	East Thomas, Private, Bucks Light Infantry
BARKER William, Private, 3 Franklin's yard, Oxon & Bucks Light Infantry	Newton Thomas, Private, Bucks Light Infantry
BARRIS Charles, Private, Tinsbury Alley, 2nd/4th Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry	Oldridge Thomas, Corporal Bucks Light Infantry

