

It's been a long time coming

A bit of a mixed bag of information in this Newsletter but I'll start with the most important.

Village & Countryside Walks

We have a number of walks scheduled for this year. The first of the Countryside walks is this **Sunday, 15th June**. Some of you may have received information on this already but full details are attached. The walk starts and finishes at **Hampton Gay**, with tea provided at Manor Farm. If the weather is good this promises to be an excellent walk with interesting history bits thrown in for good measure. And also the possibility of seeing barn owls and, if we're really lucky, otters! One was seen on this stretch of the Cherwell last week. Short notice for this walk I'm afraid but if we don't get sufficient numbers we'll reschedule it for later in the summer.

Sunday, 29th June – first of the Village History walks – around **Middleton Stoney** – led by Martin Greenwood. Details attached.

Sunday, 27th July, Bob will lead a Village History walk around **Bletchington**. More details of that will be sent later.

Sunday 10th or 17th August (date to be confirmed) – a Countryside Walk based around **Middleton Stoney**

Sunday, 31st August – a Town History Walk around **Brackley**, lead by someone from Brackley History Society. More on that will be sent later.

World War I – Bicester Walk – later on in the year we will have a guided walk around Bicester, lead by Nigel Walton, showing us what happened in the first year of the war (1914) in Bicester – more details to follow but it will probably be in September.

Outings:

We currently have two options and we might organise both:

- A visit to **Kelmarsh Hall** (between Northampton and Market Harborough – house and gardens
- A trip to **Marlborough**, initially to visit The Merchant's House (recommended) and also a history walk around the town.

We'll probably run either or both in August or early September. The trip to Milestones Museum in Basingstoke last year was a good day out so we'll probably hire the mini-bus again unless we're oversubscribed and have to hire a coach. More on this once we've got the dates confirmed.

Archaeological Dig:

I'm pleased to say that we will be returning to The Old Priory to dig up Rob Parkinson's garden! We first visited this site in July 2012. Based on the results of that dig and other geophysics data then we have other areas that are worthy of excavation. Paul Riccoboni, who supervised the dig last time, has agreed to look after us – remember the remains of St Edburg still haven't been found!!!

! Keep the **Saturday/Sunday of 6th/7th September** free for this, especially for those of you who weren't able to get their hands (and knees) dirty last time!

HELP NEEDED

Vacancy! We do need someone who take on the role of Publicity Officer – making sure information on meetings gets into the local press and published by posters, etc. And a knowledge of using Facebook would be helpful so that we can make our presence known even more! We've got some interesting projects coming along and they'll need good publicity at the appropriate time. Need to know more? Contact Bob Hessian or any of the other Committee members.

DONATED ITEMS

Over the years the Society has acquired many historical items, especially those of a photographic nature.

We are trying to bring our archive records up to date and would like to be able to record "who gave what" and "to whom was it given"?

So when you have a moment, think back to our Meetings, Exhibitions, Oral history sessions at the Pop-In Centre, etc., - did you donate or lend an item or items, what was it, and whom did you give it to?

We want to have an accurate archive, documented so that others can see what we have.

And if you do have something that you would like to donate/lend to the Society then please let me or a committee Member know.

Committee: Bob Hessian (Chairman), Sally James (Treasurer), John Roberts, Gill King, Sally Dexter, Matthew Hathaway.

PROJECTS

Our two priority projects for this year are to produce:

- A DVD on the buildings and architecture of Bicester
- A new Town Trail

We have received financial grants for both of these projects.

Later on in the year, we will start working on the production of a DVD and booklet on the role of Bicester people (and some from local villages) in the First World War. We already have a large amount of information and data to support the project, but if you have any information or stories that you think may be of interest to us, then please get in touch.

Next Meeting: Monday, 16th June:
Strange Aspects of Oxon History - Brian Lowe
At the Clifton Centre, 7.30pm

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Urgent Information on Gavray Meadows Wildlife Site for BLHS members June 1st 2014

Gavray Drive Meadows – the campaign to save these historic meadows from destruction (more housing!) goes from strength to strength.

Gavray Meadows is an important site to save for historic Bicester. It is still under threat of development. The developers have submitted a 'scoping' report (ref 14/0001/SCOP) which shows the layout of 300 houses and this can be viewed on the Cherwell District Council (CDC) Planning website. A full planning application is expected after the developers have completed an Environmental Impact assessment. Meanwhile, CDC planners have designated Gavray Meadows as part of the River Ray Target Conservation Area on Cherwell's draft Local Plan. This should help protect the Meadows. So, please to write to CDC Planning Policy Team to oppose any building on both Gavray Meadows (land North of Gavray Drive, South of the Birmingham-London railway and East of Langford Brook), Bicester, Oxfordshire, and the Ray Target Conservation Area. Please write in your own words using the information below to David Peckford, Cherwell DC Policy Officer, Bodicote House, Banbury OX15 4AA or e-mail david.peckford@cherwell-dc.gov.uk The Local Plan examination by a government Planning Inspector started last week. (but see update below). Your letters will help show the Inspector that Bicester wants to save the Meadows.

Bicester is growing with huge new housing estates, an 'eco-town' and industrial development. It is vital to preserve the best of Bicester's heritage as the town expands.

Gavray Meadows provide the town with 8 hectares of historic and beautiful open space which is a designated Local (County) Wildlife Site. The town is currently short of green space so the Meadows are important for Bicester. Green spaces promote the health of Bicester residents.

Gavray Meadows are part of the River Ray Conservation Target Area (CTA) which is identified on the Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre map and in the Local Plan for Cherwell 2006-2031. This status should be recognized when any development is planned in the surrounding area.

The Meadows are designated for their important ecology which has developed since cultivation started in at least the Roman era. Many plants and animals in the Meadows are on the red or amber Biodiversity Action Plan list and thus are legally protected. If the Meadows are destroyed by development, the ecology cannot be successfully transplanted elsewhere in attempted reparation.

The Cherwell Local Plan includes several policies which are important for the future of Gavray Meadows. Policy ESD10 seeks to protect and increase the diversity of plants and animals in the District and their natural environment. Policy ESD11 seeks to address fragmentation of habitats by defining several CTAs. These areas should allow effort directed at restoring biodiversity at a landscape scale, by maintaining and creating UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats. Preservation of Gavray Meadows in their entirety fulfills these important planning policies.

Gavray Meadows are in the flood plain of the Langford Brook. Langford village is adjacent to the Meadows and already experiences flooding despite flood prevention work by the Environment Agency and the presence of large balancing ponds. The Meadows act as a sponge for large volumes of water and drainage of this land before any house-building will exacerbate flooding downstream.

The developers have submitted a 'scoping' report to CDC Planning Dept for 300 houses which will surround the Meadows and encroach on the Conservation Target Area. It is heartening that Bicester Town Council recently opposed housing in the Gavray area as they wish to maintain it as green space and other organisations have objected. Many local residents also object, including more than 1,200 who signed our petition. To preserve the wildlife, the land needs to be managed with conservation in mind and not be subject to undue disturbance by housing close-by.

Latest News:

CDC Planning Policy Team have a big headache! The Planning Inspector stopped the Local Plan proceedings last Wednesday, saying the draft Plan was unsound because it's not based on correctly assessed figures. He's asking for 1140 houses/year to be built. CDC have until December to make radical adjustments to their plan and find land.

So, this puts immense pressure on all the sites around Cherwell that now become vulnerable to more housing/development...Upper Heyford (5,000), SE Bicester (1,200), Kidlington to coalesce with Oxford, West of Banbury to spill over the Salt Way, Caversfield was raised again, altho' the site was turned down recently on Appeal...and of course Gavray Drive. Worryingly for those of us who near the M40, one developer said there could be a second eco-town or a garden city at Jnct 9 of the M40! Weston Front will need to come out retirement!

To find out more, please visit www.facebook.com/savegavraywildlifemeadows . This can be accessed as a webpage without being a Facebook member. To contact Pam Roberts for information please 'phone 01869-245313 or e-mail jnandpm.roberts@virgin.net.

Sorry about the dire lack of pictures - however, i will give you this one:



This is the youngest of the clutch of seven barn owls that hatched last month (in our loft) to survive. The seventh (youngest and smallest) didn't survive but i wasn't prepared to let it happen to the sixth. I retrieved it, fed it and put it back. I've done this about 5 times and now he's catching up with his brothers and sisters and is capable of looking after himself when it comes to feeding. I must devise a talk – "The local history of barn-owls in Weston on the Green" ☺

COUNTRYSIDE WALK – Hampton Gay – Sunday 15th June 2014



How to get there:

From Bicester drive towards Oxford on the A41 to Junction 9 of the M40. Head towards Oxford on the A34. Ignore the turn off for Weston on the Green (B430) but take the next exit (Islip turn, B4027, about 2 miles from Junction 9). At the end of the exit slip turn left at the T-junction onto the B4027 towards Bletchington.

In Bletchington, almost opposite the village green, turn left towards Hampton Poyle. After about one mile, there is a turn off to the right. It is not very well signposted, but this is the no-through-road to Hampton Gay. At the very end of the road/lane you will come to the farm. We will be able to park our cars in the field through the farm gate ahead of you.

Distance: approximately 3¾ miles

Terrain: mostly flat. Some of the walk is through fields which have this year's lambs present. I have been asked by the farmer if people can refrain from bringing dogs, irrespective of whether they're kept on a lead. They've had a lot of problems, both this year and last, from ignorant people who think their dog is under control but with near disastrous consequences.

Start: at 2.00pm. And as long as we don't get lost we should be back at the farm by around 4.30pm. The farmer's wife will be providing tea and the monies collected will go towards maintaining Hampton Gay church and paying the organist who plays the harmonium there ☺

The walk includes visits to Hampton Gay church, Shipton-on-Cherwell church, and Thrupp, to return via a walk along the River Cherwell and Hampton Poyle.

John Roberts and Bob Hessian will be leading the walk.

The cost is £5 per person for the tea and walk, with all money going to Hampton Gay church funds. It should be paid to Sally James at the start.

Please let Sally (Bicester 243804) know by Thursday this week if you are coming so we have an indication of how many to cater for.

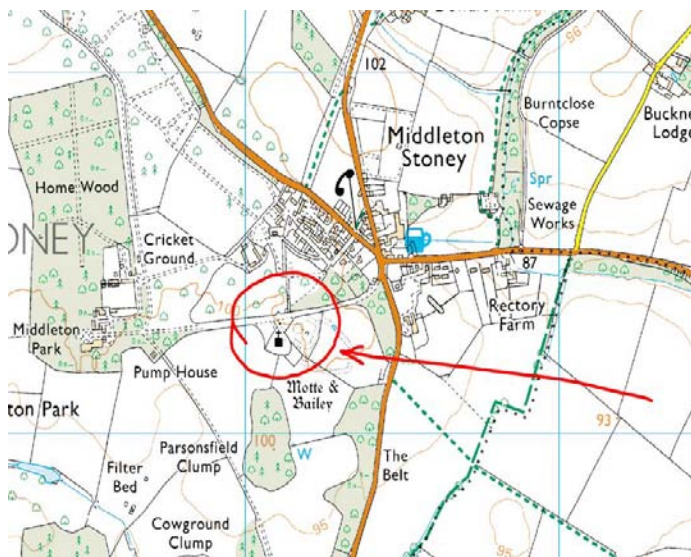
If you need to get in touch beforehand John Roberts' phone no. is 01869 245313 and Bob's is 01869 350662.

VILLAGE HISTORY WALK – Middleton Stoney – Sunday 29th June 2014

Directions:

Take the B4030 out of Bicester to Middleton Stoney. At the traffic lights in Middleton Stoney turn left and **immediately on the right** is the entrance to Middleton Park. Follow the road until you come to the church on the left and park your cars between road and church.

Note: turning left and then right by the traffic lights can be a problem, especially if the B430 is busy. An alternative would be to drive to Chesterton using the B4095 and stay on this until it reaches the B430. Turn right towards Middleton Stoney and then the turn for the park is on the left immediately before the traffic lights.



Distance: approximately 1½ - 2 miles

Terrain: mostly flat. No rough terrain. Leisurely pace!

Start: at 2.30pm.

Martin Greenwood is leading this - I think we get a look inside the big house! The cricket club will have had a match and a barbecue and a bar – so the barbecue facility will be available to us if we need it and of course the bar will be open as well. Donations to the Cricket Club. Catherine & Andrew Fulljames who have lived in the village for 34 years will probably walk round with us and share their knowledge of the place.

Please let Sally (Bicester 243804) know by Monday, 23rd June if you are coming so we have an indication of how many to cater for.

If you need to get in touch beforehand my 'phone no. is 01869 350662.