



A Window into Bicester's Architectural History

For our March meeting fellow BLHS member, Pat Snelson, gave us her talk on the history of Bicester's windows.

Windows are amongst the most important features an architectural historian uses to date a building, because their design changes with fashion and with developments in glass technology. But new windows can also be used to quickly upgrade much older buildings, as can be seen in many of Bicester's historical town centre houses, so they are not always reliable as dating clues.

The earliest windows were simply holes in the gables of dwellings which were designed to vent open-hearth smoke and were called 'wind eyes'. While glass-making was known in Roman times, most windows through the medieval period had no glass - only wooden mullions - and were closed by internal wooden shutters. Glass remained expensive and of variable quality for many years and was not a common sight in domestic houses until the early 17th century, when the new technique of Crown glass became widely adopted from the continent, making glass much more affordable.

The earliest glazed window designs were diamond or square-leaded casements. There are a few examples in Bicester (all probably dating to the early 19th century) but they are difficult to spot - usually 'hiding' in alleyways or on the side, rather than front, of buildings. A good example is the window over a side entrance of 51 Market Square (Jafflong restaurant).



The invention of chimneys brought about changes in window design in previously open-hearth buildings. New floors were installed, making use of roof space for accommodation, and new 'eyebrow' windows were inserted into thatch, or dormers into slate roofs.

In the early 18th century, a revolution in window design and fashion took England by storm. Sash windows were brought back from France by Charles II's exiled court and within 50 years were being installed everywhere. They provided better ventilation than old leaded casements, were more draft-proof and could be installed relatively easily into older buildings. There are lots of examples of houses in the centre of Bicester installing sashes where casements had been - such as this example in 34 Sheep Street.



A good example of a building which would have had sashes when first built is 47 Market Square. With a date stone of 1698, this is an early example (for Bicester) of the kind of symmetrical classical façade which became the hallmark of Georgian town houses.

In 1696, just as the sash revolution was starting, a window tax was introduced which caused the owners of some very large houses to block their windows to lower their tax due. Where you see blocked or blind windows in small dwellings, this is much more likely to do with the owner not wanting an

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Dates For Your Diary

Charles Dickens Talk

16th April - 7:30pm
see page 6

May Newsletter Submissions Deadline

4th May

Pagans & Puritans Talk

21st May - 7:30pm
see page 6

Oxford Railways Talk

18th June

Folly Bridge & Grandpont Walk

8th July

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actual window, but trying to create a symmetrical effect (as was the height of Georgian fashion) or because some internal design change required that a previously open window should be blocked.



The Regency period is known for its flamboyance and a number of new window designs were introduced to take into account the latest stylistic trends. Full height bay windows, made popular by the development of seaside resorts in this period, make their first re-appearance since medieval times and several examples can be found in Bicester of where full height bay windows have been added to much older Georgian frontages such as 10 Sheep Street. At this time, Venetian windows and Tripartite sashes were also very fashionable.

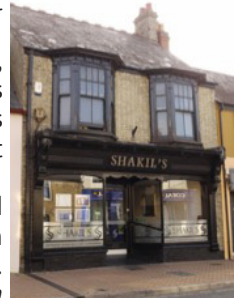


The sash remained popular throughout the 19th and early 20th

centuries. Changes in plate glass technology allowed larger panes to be made, so Victorian sashes can be identified by each sash containing, at the most, two panes of glass. Larger glass areas meant that the sash frame had to be strengthened by the addition of struts or 'horns' on the upper pane – a feature which has become synonymous with Georgian reproduction windows and the latter can be spotted very quickly because of their anachronous 'horns'.

There are not many Victorian villas in Bicester, but the windows of a few shops in Sheep Street demonstrate the true wealth and variety of Victorian architectural styles.

- Pat Snelson



Roll of Honour

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

Private Harold Alfred French, of Hethe.

Died: 1st April 1918 Aged: 22 Served in: Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Private Jesse William Baylis, of Upper Heyford.

Died: 2nd April 1918 Aged: 19 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Sapper George Hines, of Bicester.

Died: 2nd April 1918 Aged: 37 Served in: Royal Engineers

Gunner Cecil Joseph Collett, native of Bicester.

Died: 6th April 1918 Aged: 20 Served in: Royal Field Artillery

Private Frederick Thomas Smith, of Bicester.

Died: 6th April 1918 Served in: Royal Fusiliers

Private Edgar John Jameson, of Bucknell.

Died: 7th April 1918 Aged: 22 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Gunner Richard Porter, of Chesterton.

Died: 8th April 1918 Aged: 30 Served in: Royal Garrison Artillery

Private Ernest Alfred Victor Blencowe, of Cottisford.

Died: 15th April 1918 Aged: 32 Served in: Machine Gun Corps

Private Bernard Kenneth Gibbard, of Ardley.

Died: 17th April 1918 Aged: 20 Served in: Worcestershire Regiment

Private Thomas Wise, of Weston-on-the-Green.

Died: 21st April 1918 Aged: 24 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Percy Allen Damant DSM MSM, of Stoke Lyne.

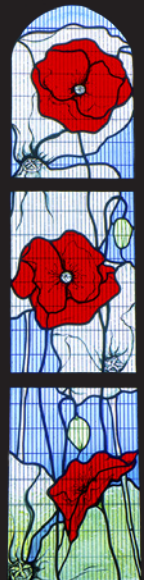
Died: 27th April 1918 Aged: 30 Served in: Royal West Kent Regiment

Private Robert Kerwood, of Bletchingdon.

Died: 27th April 1918 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

Private William Barnard Duffield, of Islip.

Died: 30th April 1918 Aged: 23 Served in: Machine Gun Corps



Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

28th April 1882

THE PAROCHIAL HALL - We have been informed by the vicar that the first stone of the parochial hall will be laid about the 1st of June, and the building he hopes to have completed before the 1st of November next.

The architect will be J.G. Bruton Esq, of Oxford, from whose long experience and well-known architectural taste we may expect an ornament to our town and worthy of our grand old church with all its noble associations.

As the generous gift of our townsman, Mr Jonas Paxton, has enabled the vicar to begin his work at once and it does not require prophet's prescients to foretell that funds to the sum already in hand will be forthcoming to perfect what has been so earnestly undertaken and so auspiciously begun.

A meeting of the Building Committee will be held on Saturday, May 13th, at half-past six o'clock, in the Literary Institute, when it is hoped the vicar will be enabled to lay the plans before the committee.

The Ladies Committee will continue to act until the hall is built and fully furnished as all will agree this could not be well done without their valuable aid.

10th April 1908

CHARITY BREEDS VAGRANCY - Trampdom seems to flourish as much as ever. Two hundred and seventeen tramps in the week at the Bicester Workhouse is a large lot for a quiet rural district, but allowance must be made for the making of the new railway, some of the men being possibly bona fide searchers for work.

Vagrancy has its main root in so-called charity, and if it were not for people who habitually give to tramps and vagrants the mode of life would not pay, and the game would soon be abandoned. No doubt many railway employees relieve wanderers, and wherever there is a chance among numbers of getting a "copper" there they flock, according to a principle which appears to actuate others beside loafers - namely, to go wherever other

human beings congregate - "the more the merrier" as the old adage runs.

For efficiency and cheapness, perhaps, the ticket system for relieving wanderers cannot be surpassed. A well-known cleric in the Bicester country gives a ticket for the village shop for a half-penny worth of bread - a plan which has more than one merit!

22nd April 1932

TUSMORE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE - A meeting was held in the cricket pavilion yesterday, with Lady Sybil Smith in the chair. After discussion of business Miss Parkhurst gave a delightful lecture on flowers and their legends.

The monthly competition of "something new from old" was won by Mrs Ridgeway, of Finmere, with a beautifully made rag rug. The second prize, for a child's snit from a skirt, went to Mrs Wright, of Shelswell; whilst Miss Cannings, of Stoke Lyne, won third prize with a baby's frock.

The result of last month's competition, to put the greatest possible number of objects in a matchbox, was won by Miss Cannings with 187, second, Mrs Savin, Stoke Lyne, 171, third, Mrs Ewings, Tusmore, 170.

It was decided that Mrs Slater-Harrison should go as a delegate to the annual meeting in London, and that Miss Ashwell accompany her.

A pleasant meeting ended with a competition for guessing advertisements.

19th April 1957

NEW VIEW IN TOWN - Now that demolition work in Bell Lane is completed, Bicester has a new view. The Methodist Church looks far more impressive than it ever did in the past, and for the first time in this part of town, there is plenty of elbow room.

Another point of interest is that a church and a public house are now neighbours. Not every town can claim that.

Heritage Open Day

The Extraordinary Women of Bicester

Many of you will be aware of the annual 'Heritage Open Days' which takes place each September.

Last year St Edburg's Church opened its doors to display some of its rich heritage, in connection with the work being done to the church building.

This year there will be another event held at St Edburg's, but with a wider theme, and we are hoping many people from the local community will want to be involved - and that very much includes the members of Bicester Local History Society.

We will be following the national theme of 'Extraordinary Women' which has been proposed in recognition of the 100 years since the first women got the vote. However, our women will be from Bicester and the surrounding area, those who have made a difference, who deserve to be celebrated. They can be people from the past or from the present. But we need YOU to tell us who you think should be included and

why. If you can provide any information about them, and possibly a photograph, that would be very much appreciated.

The Heritage Day will take place on Saturday 8th September from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will be a free event to which all are welcome. There will be displays and information tables representing various organisations as well as individuals, and, of course, refreshments available. Do put the date in your diaries now.

But the planning has already started. There is a lot of work to be done so the sooner we get suggestions the better. If any of you can suggest deserving ladies we could include please do contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please contact the St Edburg's Heritage Group via the Church Office in Old Place Yard. Tel: 01869 323375 or email: office@stedburgschurch.org

- Gill King

Village History Upper Heyford

Upper Heyford is about 6 miles northwest of Bicester on the east bank of the River Cherwell. It has access to the Oxford Canal which runs parallel to the River Cherwell from Banbury and Somerton in the north towards Lower Heyford and Oxford in the south.

The Portway is a pre-Roman road running parallel with the River Cherwell on high ground about 1 mile east of the river. Its course bisects Upper Heyford parish and passes just east of the village. Part of it forms a minor road to Kirtlington.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records the village as Haiford, with a manor of 10 hides that was owned by the Norman baron, Robert D'Oyly. Along with many manors of the D'Oyly estate, Heyford became part of the Honour of Wallingford. The manor was tenanted by the de Chesney family until the late 12th century, when Maud de Chesney became married to Henry FitzGerold, chamberlain to Henry II. Maud left the manor to her eldest son, Warin, who had succeeded to the manor by 1198 and after whom the village became called Heyford Warren. Warin's daughter, Margaret, married Baldwin de Redvers, son of William de Redvers, 5th Earl of Devon. Heyford Warren remained with the Earls of Devon and thereby passed to Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon, in 1262.

Isabella outlived all her children, so after her death in 1293 her inheritance was disputed between Warin de Lisle and Hugh de Courtenay, who later became 9th Earl of Devon. Warin died in 1296 but his son, Robert, eventually won legal possession of Heyford Warren in 1310, except for two and a half virgates that were awarded to de Courtenay. Robert also received the nearby manor of Fritwell from the Countess's estate. In 1380 his great-grandson, also Robert de Lisle, sold the manor, along with some land at Barford St. Michael, to William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, for £1,000. William then made them part of his endowment for the foundation of New College, Oxford.

In about 1400, New College had a tithe barn built at Manor Farm. It is 120ft long by 24ft wide, spans nine bays and was built of coursed rubble with ashlar quoins



and buttresses. The roof is of Stonesfield slate and has raised-cruck trusses. The building has similarities with tithe barns at Swalcliffe and Adderbury, both of which were also built for New College early in the 15th century. It is a scheduled monument and a Grade I listed building.

Upper Heyford's common lands were enclosed in 1842 and New College still held the manor in the 1950s.



High Street cottages in 1904 and 2017

The village had a church by 1074. The current parish church of Saint Mary may have been rebuilt in the latter part of the 15th century, but only the Perpendicular Gothic tower survives from that time. Major repairs to the roof and south aisle were made in 1668 and 1769, but by the 1860s the nave and chancel were in a poor condition again. The architect, Thomas Talbot Bury, demolished all except the tower in 1865 and rebuilt them in a Gothic Revival interpretation of Perpendicular Gothic. This Victorian building has extremely regular coursed masonry, which departs conspicuously from the traditional Medieval rubble masonry of the tower. Bury preserved only a handful of features from the Medieval church: a Perpendicular Gothic window in the north wall of the chancel, a piscina, a tomb recess and a 13th-century effigy of a priest.

The tower has three bells, the oldest of which is the tenor bell cast in 1624 by Richard I Purdew, who had foundries in Glastonbury and Stoford in Somerset. Mears & Stainbank, of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, cast the second bell in 1866 and the treble bell in 1946. There is also a Sanctus bell of unknown date.

Just to the east of the village is the former RAF Upper Heyford air base. Originally established as an RFC aerodrome in 1915, the RAF used the air base from the 1920s as a bomber station.

Not long after World War II, the USAF leased the air base from the Ministry of Defence as part of the NATO alliance. In 1952 the USAF's Strategic Air Command B-47

bomber aircraft arrived and stayed until 1965. The 66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing took up residence with the RF-101C "Voodoo" until 1969. By the mid-1970s the F-100s of the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing arrived and were replaced soon after by the F-111E "Aardvark". The US drawdown brought a close to USAF occupancy and operations at the air base in 1994, at which time the site was returned to the Ministry of Defence.

Since its closure in 1994, the base has become a substantial industrial and commercial estate. Whilst some of the buildings have been left to decay, the runway, once the second longest in Europe, is used to store new cars awaiting delivery to dealers. Numerous Cold War relics remain including disused bunkers and water towers, but a lot of the derelict structures have now been demolished to make way for new housing developments.

- Matthew Hathaway



Marj's Memories The Old and the Young in the 1930s & 40s

Some happenings today bring back memories of yesteryear. The talk of obesity; changing the clocks; talk about computers and always the weather.

During the war the clocks were put forward 2 hours giving us double summertime. The purpose was to give farmers and gardeners more to time work and produce food. The children had long days, often hot and late at night people would sit out to cool off. In my family we would sit on the doorstep and shell the peas and beans for the next day.

Children could play out till quite late, often in the sunshine. I wonder how many of our members remember the games we played in the street, such as:

- The big ship sails through the Aly Aly Hoo (probably wrong spelling).
- Poor Mary is a-weeping.
- I sent a letter to my love and on the way I dropped it.
- Wallflowers, wallflowers growing up so high.

Some elderly ladies would be outside, leaning on the gate with arms crossed just watching the children play and getting the cool evening air.

We didn't have computers or mobile phones, but had games such as Snakes and Ladders and Ludo. Most of us were taught by parents and grandparents to play card games: rummy, whist, banker and lots of variations, and dominoes, draughts, shove-ha'penny. Our brains were well exercised by learning at home. Most of us could ride a bike; tell the time; play darts and work out the scores.

Old Mrs Hedges, a lovely lady, who lived opposite The Star, would walk over with her jug in the evenings to get her stout. In those days we all talked to each other, children and adults. I was fascinated by the ladies who wore their hair in a bun. I asked Mrs Hedges what she did with her hair at night and her reply was "I takes it off and hangs it on the bedstead".

There was a war on and we had very little but we didn't really know any different – those lovely long evenings and the games we played, and talking with the elderly still brings back such uncomplicated, lovely memories.

- 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 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 in Oxfordshire.**

Monday 18th June

Liz Woolley returns to tell us about **The Coming of the Railway to Oxford.**

Launton Roll of Honour Can You Help?

Launton Historical Society has been working for some years on the lives of the men who are listed on the First World War Roll of Honour that was put up in Launton Church in 1917.

We are hoping to put on a display about these men on the weekend of 10th and 11th November later this year. We are particularly interested in getting photos of these men (not necessarily in uniform) and any other information that their descendants would care to share with us.

These are the men whose descendants we would particularly like to hear from - I have included their dates and the last known area where they lived:

- Harry Ancil 1886-1967 (Chesterton)
- Arthur W. Castle 1886-1979 (Ambrosden)
- Jesse Castle 1896-1956 (Bicester)
- Charles Jeacock 1892-1962 (Chesterton)
- Frederick T. Jeacock 1886-1980 (Aynho)
- William J. Jeacock 1888-1980 (Bicester)
- William Lambourne 1894-1938 (Bicester)
- James Long 1879-1960 (Bicester)
- Harold J.S. Marriott (Caversfield)
- Amos B. Palmer 1886-1964 (Bicester)
- William Palmer 1897-1981 (Bicester)
- George Penn 1885-1961 (Bicester)
- Ralph T. Sansom 1897-1971 (Stratton Audley)
- Walter Sansom 1895-1959 (Bicester)
- Henry Timms 1895-1988 (Islip)

We also know from the Electoral Roll drawn up in 1918

and the Absent Voters List that was drawn up at the same time, that there were a number of men serving in the forces at that time and who were registered as living in Launton and entitled to vote.

As this list was drawn up 18 months after the Roll of Honour was placed in the church, several extra names have come to light. Several of these are proving very hard to track down, so if you can help us with any of these men, I should be most grateful:

- Albert George Ayres. Born 1887 in Bicester. Married Annie Jones. Three children. He died in 1982.
- Frederick Casemore. Born in Bicester. Married Edith White. They lived at Buckingham. He died in 1973.
- Edward Charles Hughes (railwayman). Born 1890 at Middleton Stoney. Married Ellen Scarsbrook. Children Ellen, Frederick, Louis and Thomas.
- James Leach.
- Horace Lockett. Living in Blake Road, Bicester, in 1939. Lorry driver for the RAF.
- Francis William Walker.

We would be delighted to hear from families connected to these names, also the other men named on the roll. We know that several died unmarried, some emigrated overseas, quite a few moved to the Birmingham area and some to London, but half returned to Launton, or nearby.

If you had a father, grandfather or great grandfather, or uncle or cousin perhaps, who you think may be on our Roll of Honour, please do get in touch.

Tel: 01869 253281

- Pat Tucker

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