



Bicester Historian



Issue: 52 December 2018

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society



Happy Xmas (War is Over)



This year we again took part in the Christmas Tree Festival at St Edburg's Church.

For the last few years we have struggled to better our 2014 tree, which featured bronze death plaques with the names of all the soldiers from Bicester who died during the First World War, in honour of the centenary of the start of the war in August 1914.

This year, being the centenary of the end of the war, we knew that we would have to do something really special to mark it. But we couldn't think how best to do it.

Then, after producing the map for the Remembrance exhibition that showed where each of Bicester's fallen had lived, we hit on the idea of using pictures of their houses, as they are today, and thus bridging the 100 years from then to now.

This proved to be just as popular as our 2014 one, and once again the church have requested to keep the tree up for the rest of the Christmas season.

- Matthew Hathaway

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Dates For Your Diary

Christmas Social Event
17th December - 7:30pm
see page 5

Bicester Advertiser Local History Article
3rd January

January Newsletter Submissions Deadline
4th January

Church Memorials Talk
21st January - 7:30pm
see page 5

**A Happy New Year
To you on the Square,
Round to Sheep Streeters all-
A Happy New Year.**

**To Causeway and King's End,
To all far and near.**

**I make bold to repeat it,
A Happy New Year!**

*Bicester Advertiser,
30th December 1932*

Marj's Memories

Evans Yard & Alf Evans' Shop



Most of us will remember Alf Evans' draper's shop in Sheep Street, opposite Evans Yard. All types of clothing, shoes, haberdashery, menswear, material and wool were sold there. Alf Evans originally had two shops on the other side of the road, (see picture below) one either side of Evans Yard. This was long before my time, of course.

Alf Evans was a thriving business for many years. Local women used to put by a certain amount of wool and collect it periodically to knit for their families. Nearly all jumpers were hand-knitted in those days, and material purchased for dress making. The shop had two doors and two floors. In the front of the shop

were three smart glass display arcades. There were a few shops in Sheep Street with similar arcades.

Henry Evans, son of Alf Evans, took over the shop when his father died and it was reorganised. The men's section was opened in a new shop that had been for many years Prentice's shoe shop; now Connells the Estate Agents.

Evans Yard, in the picture, was known more for the doctors' surgery, just into the yard, on the left. The two doctors who served most of the town's people, were Dr Montgomery and Dr House - hence the name today of the doctors' surgery "Montgomery House Surgery" in Coker Close.

- Marjorie Dean MBE



The two earlier shops, either side of Evans Yard, 1906

Bygone Bicester

(Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

15th December 1882

THE OPENING OF ST EDBURG'S HALL - On Wednesday last, the new hall, named after the patron saint of Bicester church, St Edburg, was opened.

The building is of the most compact character, and in addition to the large room of the hall, so much to be desiderated for parochial purposes, has upon its basement certain subsidiary rooms which may be utilised as classrooms, and thus pressed into the service of science, or can be, as they were on Wednesday, turned into refreshment rooms, with the happiest effect upon the popularity of the Church and Church managers in Bicester.

The plan of the architect, Mr Bruton, has been carried into execution very happily by the builder, Mr Kingerlee, and is as perfect in the way of accommodation as it is from a professional point of view. The site, for which Mr Jonas Paxton has to be thanked, is exceedingly convenient, and will permit of the hall on some occasion supplementing the accommodation of the Parish Church, from which it is placed at a considerable distance.

The history of the erection of the hall is, to some extent, the history of our Vicar's residence amongst us. He it was who, on his arrival, saw the need we Bicester people had of a meeting place. The need was no sooner seen than our excellent incumbent set to work to meet it.

Those who, nearly twelve months ago, joined in our parochial reunion in the Corn Exchange, were on Wednesday present at the inauguration of the new building. Not only those, but many of the busy fingers which in the summer months laboured for the good work, and afterwards with busier fingers disposed of it at our bazaars, graced the occasion with their presence.

The Countess of Jersey (who performed the opening), with the Earl, the Baron and Baroness Schroeder, the gentry and clergy of the neighbourhood were also present in force to assist at the event, for which we bode the happiest results for our parish and town.

11th December 1908

ROAD IMPROVEMENTS FINALLY UNDER WAY - It is gratifying to know that at length something has been done to wards remedying the deplorable state of Priory Road, and an endeavour is to be made to come to terms with the owners similarly to what was done some years ago with regard to property in another part of the town. The residents of this street are shortly to be accommodated with a new gas main, and then will follow the street lamps and a decent footpath. Really there is now a prosperous outlook for this part of the town, which has been the subject of so much controversy, and we trust the negotiations will have a successful issue.

Speaking of Priory Road reminds one of the contrast with the state of affairs in Field Street, which has improved almost beyond calculation. Those who have not visited this spot during the last few months will scarcely recognise the now wide thoroughfare with its row of new cottages and villas, terminating with a greatly improved curve into the Banbury Road. The owners are to be highly congratulated on their undertaking.

With the anticipated improvements in the town we hope there will be no repetition of what has occurred

on the Causeway during the past summer. Some £70 was spent in an "experiment" with tar macadam, but when the Council were furnished with the estimate of cost they were not informed that a band of men armed with brooms would be required to prevent the adjoining houses from becoming flooded.

Tar macadam is no doubt a good material when properly laid, but the residents of the Causeway are praying that the old material which was carted away may be returned. The Rural District Council are considering the advisability of trying this material on their roads, but it is questionable whether their Surveyor will come to Bicester for tuition.

30th December 1932

ROYAL RADIO BROADCAST - Those Bicester people who listened on the radio to the transmission of Empire messages and the King's speech on Christmas Day will long retain the memory of it. Their loyalty was deeply stirred. They realised that for the first time in history a monarch was addressing his subjects in all quarters of the earth, and the messages from the Dominions found an echo in every heart. It was an amazing achievement.

13th December 1957

A MOST MODERN BUTCHER'S SHOP OPENS TODAY - Since 1921 the London Central Meat Company's shop in Market Square has been well-known to local housewives. Today, under the name of Baxters, the company opens its brand new shop in Sheep Street. Up-to-date in every way, it is certainly the most modern shop of its kind in Bicester.

Forming part of what was a private house next to the International Stores, work on the new shop began only thirteen weeks ago. The contractor for the structural alterations was the Bicester building firm of Mr Dick Wise, of Victoria Road. Mr F. Ginger, of Bicester, carried out the electrical installation. The new shop has been superbly equipped for present day requirements.

The new store continues under the management of Mr Dick Reed, the well-known and popular 27 year old who came as a relief manager for a fortnight four years ago, and ended up staying ever since. His home is at Towcester, and it was at the local branch there that he started work as butchers boy when he left school twelve years ago. After breaking for two years National Service in the Army, he returned to the firm and came to Bicester in 1953.

A keen dancer, Dick is a prominent member of the Bicester Old Time Dancing and Social Circle, and often acts as master of ceremonies at club dances.



Roll of Honour

The following are the local men who died in the Great War, 100 years ago, that we have been unable to confirm any further information for.

John Henry Allen, of Somerton.

Ernest Wilfred Buckingham, of Merton.

Harold Crawford, of Merton.

Mark Herbert Crawford, of Merton.

Reginald Crawford, of Merton.

James Franklin, of Oddington.

Gordon Girdlestone, of Merton.

Charles Richard Harper, of Launton.

George Harris, of Bicester.

Arthur Stanley Holiday, of Merton.

William Hopkins, of Merton.

William King, of Bicester.

Reginald Kirk, of Merton.

Walter Kirtland, of Merton.

Rowland Knapton, of Ambrosden.

John Manley, of Lower Heyford.

Harry Nicholls, of Ardley.

Harry Charles Norman, of Lower Heyford.

W. Peverell, of Cottisford.

Henry Phipps, of Merton.

Joseph Price, of Oddington.

Trooper Charles Robert Sharp, of Arncott.

Served in: Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars

Henry Stevens, of Islip.

Private W. Stevens, of Hethe.

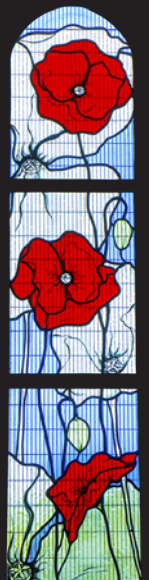
Served in: Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Frederick Turney, of Middleton Stoney.

Albert Watson, of Islip.

Private Richard Woodhouse, of Bucknell.

Served in: Royal Army Veterinary Corps



Talks Update

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

Monday 17th December

This meeting will be our **Christmas Social**.

Monday 21st January

Christopher Young tells us about the memorials of St Edburg's Church in his **Churches Have Memories** talk.

Monday 18th February

Elaine Steane comes to talk to us about **Oxfordshire Mills**.

Oxfordshire in 50 Objects Talk

On Monday 19th November Stephen Barker came to tell us a bit about the Oxfordshire Museum Service and the anniversary exhibition they held in 2016.

2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the Oxfordshire Museum Service. They decided to celebrate by putting on a special exhibition in the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock. It ran throughout the summer of that year and received almost 7,000 visitors.

The Service began with the purchase and opening of Fletcher's House, in Woodstock, as the county museum on 15th October 1966. They set out to promote pride and understanding in the county and came to co-ordinate 40 museums across the county.

Education services were started in the 1960s. Many people remember the "red boxes" that were sent to schools with a variety of artefacts in them for children to study. These were stopped in the 1990s after funding cuts made it impossible to continue.

The anniversary exhibition was special because all the objects on display were selected by local groups and organisations from around the county, as well as some of the Service's former employees. The selection included:

Oxford Symphony Orchestra chose a violin, by John George Keely (1925-2014) of Chipping Norton, that was modelled on a Stradivarius.

Clare Saunders, a Museum Resources Admin Officer, chose a 1920s model theatre from Wolvercote.



The Friends of Oxfordshire Museum chose a 19th century charity box from Yarnton.

Woodstock Primary School

children chose a clock gun, from Woodstock, that dated from the early 20th century.

Residents of Spencer Court Care Home, in Woodstock, chose a First World War dress uniform of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry, because one resident remembered the man who originally wore it.

Witney Stroke Group chose a 1960s telephone switchboard, from Witney, similar to ones that some of them remember working on.



Bicester Local History Society were also invited to take part. We chose an 18th century wedding ring that belonged to members of the Dew family. George Dew had been the Poor Law Officer for the Bicester District.

- Matthew Hathaway

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