



# Brookside School's 150th

Brookside Primary School in Bucknell Road recently marked the 150th anniversary of its opening as Bicester National Infants School in 1869 and BLHS was delighted to be asked to participate in several events.

A week of celebrations saw the 3-11-year-olds



1906

studying periods of British history since the school's founding and Sally James, dressed in her best Victorian costume, presented a history of Crockwell School to years 3/4. Articles from the Bicester Herald; photographs and plans from the Macclesfield House Collection at the Oxford History Centre; extracts from the logbook from the National Boys School and BLHS's oral history records enabled the children to appreciate something of schooling in the past.

Overcrowding is a theme that runs through the history of primary

education in Bicester which meant that a mere eleven years after the establishment of Bicester National Boys School and Bicester National Girls School in the former St Edburg's School premises in Piggy Lane, the infants were transferred to a new building in Spring Close, Bucknell Road.

The building, on land leased from the Cokers, was financed by grants and subscriptions. The Oxford Times described it as 'a neat structure, consisting of one large room, with a moveable partition, and a class room with a playground adjoining'.

The Market End Local Government Board, when considering a proposal to widen the road by the new school site, highlighted other problems prevalent in the Crockwell area. Some of the roads, paths and drains were in a poor state of repair and the bridge over the brook in Spring Close,

**BICESTER.**  
**BICESTER INFANT SCHOOL.**—This School was opened on Monday last. The children of the National Schools (including those to be drafted to the new Infant School), and about 40 fresh scholars assembled at the National Schools, and with flags and banners marched through the town to the new building. On their way they halted several times, and sang hymn and school songs. On their arrival at the new Schools, some more hymns were sung by the children. The Vicar offered up prayer, and the children were then regaled with buns and oranges, the proceedings winding up by the young folks giving three hearty cheers for the kind friends who had provided the school room and the day's festival; 420 children were present. The School is well built by Mr. Lewis, of Bicester, under Mr. Beesley, as architect. The total cost, with boundary walls, will be a little over 600/. The amount is not quite all raised.

Bicester Herald - 8th May 1869

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## Dates For Your Diary

**Bicester's Great War Talk**  
18th November - 7:30pm  
see page 4

**December Newsletter Submissions Deadline**  
29th November

**Bicester Advertiser Local History Article**  
5th December

**St Edburg's Church Christmas Tree Festival**  
6th-8th December

**BLHS Christmas Social**  
16th December - 7:30pm  
see page 4

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being unenclosed, was a danger to the public. Additionally, although gas had come to the town in 1845, street lighting in this area was inadequate. The Board's hope was that these issues would be resolved prior to the school's opening.

The school, having been set up under the banner of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, incorporated daily worship and weekly visits from the vicar to give a scripture lesson, into its timetable. On the evening of Thursday 3rd June 1869, the schoolroom was opened for divine worship 'more especially for the benefit of the working classes residing in Crockwell and New Buildings' according to the Bicester Herald. It's interesting to note that the National Society was set up in 1811, but did not succeed in establishing National Schools in

the town until 1835 (girls) and 1858 (girls and boys). The delay was due to differences between the church and the large nonconformist element locally.

The Blue Coat School – a charity school housed in Blue Coats and Tysul House, Church Terrace – amalgamated with the National Schools in 1861. The 1873 logbook records the boys who continued to receive what the headmaster called 'The Blue Clothes' and where he notes their addresses, it's evident that the poorer parts of town were well-represented.

Other help was available to disadvantaged children. Mrs Palmer from Rose Cottage, London Road, took a great interest in the town's schools and in 1891 she started to provide breakfast three times a week to about fifty of the poorest children at the boys and girls schools. No doubt her benevolence would have extended to the infants' school.

In 1933, the Piggy Lane building became the senior school and primary education was based at Crockwell

with 268 children on role. In the following years, a wooden hut on the playground extended the accommodation, as did an annex at Highfield.

Highfield Secondary Modern School was built in 1952 and the older children transferred there and primary education was resumed at the St Edburg's School site.

Deterioration of the Crockwell School building, described as 'squalid and sub-standard', resulted in the building of Brookside School, officially opened in January 1958. The old building continued in use until 1972 when the school, variously



Crockwell School with wooden hut extension - 1970s

known as Bicester National Infants School, Bicester Church of England Junior School and Crockwell School, but affectionally known as 'the little school', finally closed its doors.

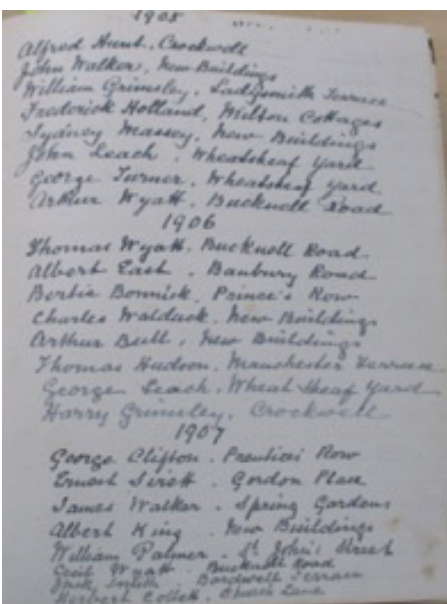
- Sally James



Highfield Annex - 1951



Brookside School - 1960s





## Bicester, From a Brook An Old Window

This is the fifth in a series of articles that were originally published in the Bicester Advertiser in 1932.

We are now to have our first glimpse of the Market Place. Already, we have gained a tolerably clear idea of Bicester's formation from the beginning, though none of the local histories is very definite on the point. Blomfield refers to the old village street paved by the monks and states that though most of it was enclosed within the premises of Bicester House "one little bit remains where it is blocked by a wall built across it". He omits to locate this bit, but it seems a reasonable supposition that it is the old Brewery Yard, and that this end of "The Street", together with the rising road past the Council Chamber to the Bridge, was the original Bicester Causeway. Most of the present Causeway is not, apparently, strictly entitled to the name, except as an addition to the old raised bank.

In recapitulation we find Bicester has reached the stage when it possesses three roads. One is "The Street", coming through the later Brewery Yard, turning left hand over the brook into the Mill Way (Water Lane, Chapel Street) as the second thoroughfare, and right hand toward the Parish Church, as the third, where it finished in a blind end. That was the simple ground plan of the village and now follows the next phase - the gradual development of the Market Place.

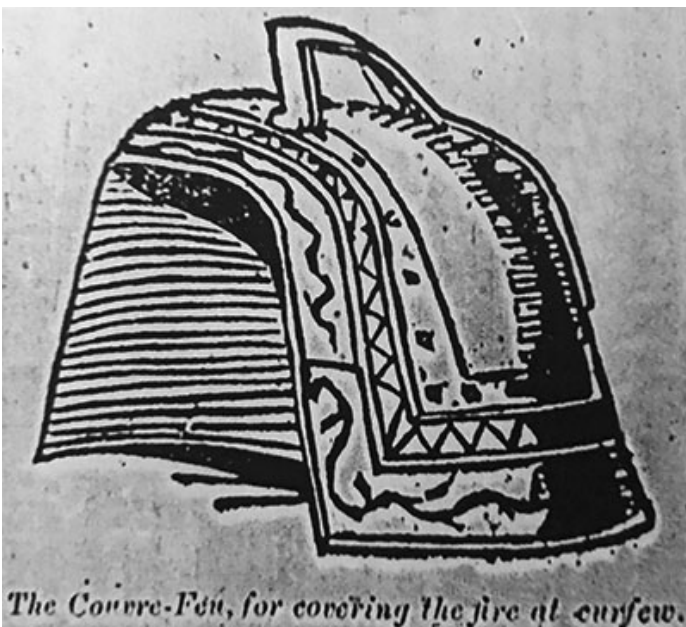
A market had previously been held for many years within the village, that is to say, at the Crocwell end. At a subsequent date "The Swan" Inn (now Ambrosden House) was erected at the bridge end of the Mill Way, and this house was the origin of the modern Market Square. Houses and shops gradually made their appearance, on both sides; then on the east side, where the oldest remaining part is situated - the block occupied by Messrs Stevens, Lambourne, Rose and Mrs Gale. Here, on market day, stood sellers of corn - not with samples in bags, but whole sacks of it. Women offered from their baskets, butter, poultry and eggs.



The back wall of Mr W. Rose's premises probably looked like that pictured in the sketch above, when it was first built. The large window, which has claimed the attention of many visitors to the town, is quite possible the original one. If so, it dates back many years; even before Queen Elizabeth. The house was built round about the year 1450, some ten years after the beginning of the Market Place. These houses had an upper part overhanging the foundations (similar to that now seen in the Causeway at the office of Mr J.L. Goldie), with picturesque gable ends and swing signboards over the footway. Next in order of erection was the group occupied by Miss E. Coles, Mr G. Harris and Mr Bowler - separated only from its neighbour by a narrow passage way and obscuring "ancient lights". That Mr Rose's window, thus largely deprived of its use in illuminating a room, belongs to the reign of Henry 6th is suggested by a comparison with the designs of 15th century architecture. The premises of Mr Ernest Pennington and others were not built till 200 years afterwards.

Until the late 15th century this part of the village, containing the Priory Church and Mill House, had been known as Bury or Town End, and now changed its name to Market End.

Here is John the Plumber in conversation with Nicholas Scheparde - probably talking to him in French, for "Gentlemen's children be taught to speak French since the Normans first came to England, and uplandish (or country) men delight to do likewise". He is telling him



of the progress that is being made with the building of the Parish Church tower, the last portion to be erected, and designed by the same architect as of Islip Church. As they talk a carriage rolls along the Causeway, and though there is no glass in its windows the vehicle is gaily decorated with coloured curtains, and all over the hood with the fleur-de-lys. The driver is on the horse's back.

He glances at Bicester's oddly shaped shops, many of them with open fronts, as he passes by, rattling over St Mary's Bridge and toward the Launton Road. News comes to hand of the printing of William Caxton's first book; of the burning of Joan of Arc, and, in the Wars of the Roses, the death of the last hopes of the House of Lancaster. Bicester folk heard in those days of the execution of Lord Say, ancestor of Lord Saye and Sele, of Broughton Castle, for his unpopularity during Cade's Revolt of the men of

Kent. Bicester and other farmers and labourers were prosperous then and clothed themselves so well that Statutes of Apparel were enacted to curtail the dress.



## Roll of Honour

*The following are the local men who died in the Second World War, 80 years ago this month.*

**Pilot Officer Kenneth Charles Harvey-Jacobs**, of Christchurch, Hampshire.

Died: 16<sup>th</sup> November 1939 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Air Force

(Died on service at RAF Bicester, buried at Caversfield)

**Pilot Officer Ronald Dunham-Treble**, of Bayswater, West London.

Died: 25<sup>th</sup> November 1939 Aged: 20 Served in: Royal Air Force

(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Upper Heyford)



## Christmas Tree Appeal

Once again we need your help.

The committee have decided to again decorate a tree for this year's St Edburg's Christmas Tree Festival. We have selected a shopping theme this year and need to find as many old local products or well known brands to hang on our tree.

So if you still have a set of Paragreen's creamware, a bottle of Mountain's Spirit of Sal Volatile, a pair of Kinch's trousers, or any other local products, then please let us know in the next few days so that we can photograph them and try to reproduce them as decorations.

*- Matthew Hathaway*

## Talks Update

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

### Monday 18th November

Everyone's favourite newsletter editor attempts to tell you all the story of **Bicester's Great War**.

### Monday 16th December

Our usual **Christmas Social**, complete with quiz, refreshments, and plenty of festive cheer.

### Monday 20th January

Dr Tim Jordan comes to give us a systematical look at **Cotswold Stone Barns** and their place in the rural economy.



## 17th November 1893

### RUNAWAY ADVENTURES

On Monday last a horse belonging to Mr A.E. Prentice, coal merchant, Sheep Street, went through some peculiar adventures in Sheep Street and Market Hill.

It was standing outside a house at the top of the town with a coal cart, when, through some unknown cause, it bolted, and proceeded at a good pace down Sheep Street. On its journey it came in contact with a lamppost opposite Mr J. Harris' house, which it razed to the ground.

This did not check its career, but rather increased its speed. It actually went through the narrow passage facing Hilton's Booteries without doing the slightest damage, but two children thereabouts had a narrow escape of being run over.

The animal was eventually stopped against Rose Cottage.

## 5th November 1926

### NURSING HOME ENLARGEMENT SCHEME

A well attended public meeting held at St Edburg's Hall, Bicester, on Tuesday evening gave cordial and unanimous support to the scheme for the proposed enlargement of Bicester Nursing Home, and it was decided to forward the resolution to the trustees of the Home to act in their discretion upon it.

The scheme which has been selected provides for extension of the Home towards the east as being the most suitable for the purpose, and includes a new ward on the ground floor for two beds, and an operating theatre behind this ward; a second bathroom for the use of the patients, leaving the present bathroom for the use of the staff. This new bathroom would take the place of the present kitchen, the kitchen being removed to where the nurses' bedroom is at present. Above the new ward would be provided two bedrooms for the nurses. The cost of carrying out these plans would be £820, without fittings, so that if fittings are included for the theatre, etc, the committee estimate that £1000 will be required for the scheme. It is intended that the enlargement shall form a memorial to the late Mr Henry Tubb, who, in his lifetime, had the welfare of the Home closely at heart, and at his death left the sum of £500 as principal for interest to go to the Home so long as it is used as such.

The public meeting on Tuesday was presided over by the Vicar (the Rev. W. O'Reilly) who, in his opening remarks, reminded those present that at the last meeting three weeks ago the proposed scheme was put forward once again and, so far as he could see, was approved by everybody in the room; at least there was no dissentient voice. The only difficulty was whether the Home could be maintained after the extension without financial loss, so it was decided to ask the Rev. G.B. Cronshaw, the treasurer of the Radcliffe Infirmary, to come to Bicester and explain to them the policy of the Radcliffe with regard to affiliated nursing homes.

Rev. Cronshaw, who was received with applause, remarked that he had been told that in Oxfordshire he was known as an incurable optimist, because he held the conviction that if they carried out a job the public would support them (applause). Every hospital treasurer in the kingdom had to provide funds for the maintenance of their institution, and called upon the public to help them, and it was their experience that the public had never let them down (applause). That was proved by the success of the Radcliffe Contributory Scheme in bringing in £26,000 to the Radcliffe. Therefore he appealed to Bicester not to be discouraged because they found another £150 per annum was needed for the maintenance of their Home. If they could see their way through the first year, and prove the value of the home, success would be theirs because the chief advertisement for a hospital was what it did for the patients, and then there was no lack of support. Some of the homes affiliated to the Radcliffe had been in difficulty in their early days, but, from the moment that the Radcliffe had helped them, their outlook had begun to improve, and at the present time there was not a single cottage hospital in the whole of the area that had not a good working balance.

If they gave the public what it wanted then the public, like Oliver Twist, would ask for more. No matter how many rooms were added to the Bicester Home, he did not believe there would be sufficient in five, ten or fifteen years. There was so much now had to be done by an institution where there was gathered together a certain amount of skill of the district – the cottage hospital must of course have its connection with the key hospital, and it's pathological and radiological experts – and if they in Oxford were not making use of the advantages and the services they had there, they would hardly be doing their duty to the public, in fact they would have no right to exist at all.

It was for the doctors to decide how much extension was required, then for the people who had the management in hand to help the doctors to get what was required. In maternity cases, for instance, the demand for beds was growing, and as all these cases could usually pay, he would advise any hospital contemplating an extension to consider if they could add beds for such cases. In addition, the Nursing Home could do minor operations in the operating theatre, and as this needed expert skill it raised the tone of a nursing home to a really skilled hospital, with a better service to the public.

"When the doctors have decided what they want," concluded Rev. Cronshaw, "then support them for all you are worth." (applause).

Dr Montgomery then said that, as somebody had pushed him up from behind, he would like to thank Rev. Cronshaw for his speech. Although he was chairman of the local contributory scheme, his eyes had been opened as to the payments from the Radcliffe. He did not think they ought to consider the question of maintenance

after the extension scheme, because it was a sufficient stimulus that they were setting up a memorial to the late Mr Tubb. He was pleased that the scheme had been started as a memorial to Mr Tubb, and he was certain that the rest would look after itself.

### 27th November 1959

#### RECTOR PULLS LAUNTON'S LEG

Launton had its leg pulled on Saturday, and the man who led Launton up the parish hall path with the best local leg-pull in years was the village's Australian Rector, the Rev. C.P. Sherwood.

Launton folk turned up in force at a bazaar organised by the Parish Hall Committee on Saturday to meet Señor Jose El Fabbia, billed as a bullfighter friend of Mr Sherwood. El Fabbia, brilliantly dressed in matador's costume, opened the bazaar in stumbling English. No-one suspected anything, villagers shook hands with the dark skinned warrior of the arena, and children swarmed around him for autographs.

Later on in the day El Fabbia went along to a social which followed the bazaar, and it was then that the Rector let the cat (or bullfighter) out of the bag. El Fabbia turned out to be Mr Arthur Knott, a Reading schoolmaster.

Mr Sherwood's leg-pull began several weeks ago when he announced that a bullfighter pal, Señor El Fabbia - "the man of 1,000 conquests" - had accepted an invitation to open the bazaar in aid of parish hall funds. Writing in the October issue of Ploughley 20, the local church magazine, Mr Sherwood said:

"The guest opener will be Señor Jose El Fabbia - "the man of 1,000 conquests", a bullfighter of fame, and one of the Rector's more notable friends. El Fabbia is also gifted in other ways. He is a most accomplished singer, and he has consented to grace the party in the evening and to entertain us from time to time with songs. He will also be willing to sign autographs. Jose is tall, handsome, courageous and above all - single.

We are most fortunate that he will be in England at this time. In the letter I received from him he says that he is looking forward to seeing me again. He also hopes to meet some of the ladies who were in my party in Majorca this summer. In this he is to be disappointed, but I'm sure he will be equally delighted to meet our Launton ladies."

Mr Sherwood told the same story to the bazaar committee.

How has Launton reacted to the leg-pull? One or two villages have criticised the Rector for organising the hoax. Others are now claiming that they suspected it was a leg-pull all the time.

On Tuesday, Mr Sherwood commented: "It was generally well accepted by the village. It all really started as a joke. I was asked to find an opener for the bazaar, so I decided to have a bit of fun." Mr Sherwood also said he kept his joke to himself. No one else in the village was brought into the plot.

With Mr Knott (El Fabbia) on Saturday came another "foreign gentleman", described as the bullfighter's



manager and agent. He turned out to be Mr Alan Stanford, another Reading schoolmaster. Both are members of a repertory theatre group in Reading and are personal friends of Mr Sherwood. So well did Mr Knott and Mr Stanford play their parts that they even deceived the Rector's young sons, who know them well. The costumes they wore at Saturday's bazaar were hired in Reading and paid for by the Rector.

Mr Sherwood said he thought the leg-pull contributed towards the success of the bazaar. A profit of between £65 and £70 is expected, twice as much as last year.

Why did the Rector pull Launton's leg? "It makes a bit of a change," he said.

### 12th November 1993

#### SECRETS OF STOKE WOOD REVEALED

A woodland has been opened to the public after 170 years.

The Woodland Trust has bought Stoke Wood, near Bicester, helped by a donation from Cherwell District Council. The council has been on the lookout for a country park which could be used by local people, and agreed to give its full support when the 88-acre wood came on the market. Counsellors gave the Trust a £45,000 grant towards the purchase price, in order to fill a gap in leisure provision in the district.

On Friday, the council chairman, Mr Norman



Matthews, officially opened Stoke Wood, one of the largest woodlands in North Oxfordshire, until recently



used for private hunting.

Trust woodland officer Miss Kim Wisdom will be meeting council officers over the next few weeks to discuss further development of the wood for leisure and conservation. She said: "It is just great to have such a beautiful wood, it is nice to have a large wood that we can do a lot with.

There are absolutely no rights of way in the wood, and previously if

anybody had walked there, it would have been with the permission of the owners. Now the Trust has bought it, anyone has permission to walk among the trees."

Since buying it from the Swift House estate in April, much work has already been done, including making sure the trees are safe and taking down pheasant pens. Stoke Wood boasts a variety of species including

oak, ash, maple and larch.

Mr Ian Davies, head of leisure services at Cherwell District Council, said: "Within the District Council's recreation strategy we have always acknowledged the need for a country park in the district."

An anonymous donor met the rest of the £90,000 cost of the wood.

## Talking Maps

The *Talking Maps in Libraries* roadshow came to Bicester Library last month. Although only a brief visit, it attracted a good attendance and in addition to maps from the Bodleian Library's extensive collection, it included items from the Oxford History Centre and our own collection. The Williams map from 1753 and a 'bomb' map from Oxfordshire in WWII were just a couple

of the fascinating selection on display.

Our contribution will remain in the display cases for a short while and includes Bryant's map from 1824 and a number of maps from sale catalogues. *Talking Maps*, a free exhibition at the Bodleian's Weston Library in Oxford, continues until 8th March 2020.

- Sally James



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