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Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

1970s Bicester

Since the epidemic has been forefront in the news, and the Society's activities are all on hold, there wasn't enough going on to justify a newsletter last month, so this one is a kind of double issue. But there still isn't really anything to report for the front cover, so I thought I'd pool together a few views of the town from the 1970s and maybe jog a few memories.



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Bygone Bicester - May (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

26th May 1860

DEATHS ON THE RAILWAY

On Saturday last, as the 10:55 morning train from Banbury to Oxford was passing Somerton Station, it came in contact with two cows, which were with six others on the line, and killed them on the spot, literally cutting them to pieces. It appears that the eight cows, which were the property of Mr Smith, were being taken to Heyford.

The driver had got them across the line, when they started back through a wicket which had been left open. Five of them were unhurt, a sixth in its terror ran along some distance at the side of the rails and is damaged in consequence; the other two, as we have said, were cut to pieces. The passengers in the train distinctly heard the cracking of the poor animals' bones as the carriages passed over them.

This happened on the same level crossing where, a week earlier, another tragic accident occurred.

The night policeman was left on duty there as usual on the Wednesday night, but early in the morning his remains were found on the line, dreadfully mangled and disfigured. The poor man, it is supposed, must have been knocked down by the Wolverhampton Train, but there was no evidence to show how he came on the line. Deceased was 21 years of age and had been married about three months.

25th May 1900

REJOICING - ORDERLY & OTHERWISE - AT BICESTER

It was the same at Bicester as at most other places, the people all but went mad last Saturday on hearing the news of the relief of Mafeking. The glad tidings were first brought to the town by the early morning trains, and spreading with rapidity were almost universally known by eight o'clock, after which hour, flags began to appear in places.

But the public were wary, and the credence at first given the report can hardly be called confident, as the telegram which everyone expected to see appear in the window at the Advertiser Office did not arrive. There was an excited crowd outside, which, however, had to nurse its impatience until the newspapers arrived. All doubts as to the correctness of the report being then vanquished the townspeople began to display their flags in real earnest, and the whole of the streets soon looked very gay, the general impression of brightness being increased by a half-hour's peal on the bells of the parish church.

The event of the morning, however, was what happened to Mr Hedges, the luckless jeweller, whose place of business is on the Market Square. For some time this gentleman has had the reputation of being a pro-Boer. Judge, then, the angriness of the crowd when it was discovered he had displayed a flag which was certainly red, white and blue in colour, but the white

parts of which appeared to have been steeped in red ink or some other fluid of that colour.

The crowd at once took this to represent the British flag soaked in blood, and, enraged at the insult, one of them actually entered the house, went upstairs, and tore down the offending banner amidst a ringing cheer. It was then burned on the Market Square, the course of demolition being marked by shouts of derision, while the completion of the destruction was hailed with a cheer. Loyal colours were then brought and fixed above the shop window, the occupier being dared to remove them.

But the matter did not end there. A detachment of the crowd proceeded to the victim's private house in Victoria Road, and finding a flag displayed similarly disfigured to the one already destroyed, it, too, was torn down and borne to the Market Square, where a second cremation took place.

Of course Mr Hedges went to the police, and on appearing outside his shop was hooted and ridiculed till further orders, and the crowd, becoming possessed of a tub of rank margarine literally plastered him with this offensive stuff, to say nothing of the eggs and a number of pig tails – we ought rather to say Boer tails – which were thrown at him. It is doubtful what might have happened to him had he not been accompanied by a child of tender years, but it is certain that nothing short of ducking would have satisfied the mob could they have got hold of him. The police guarded the premises while the victim of it all cleared the window, and, it is asserted, packed up the stock.

The tumult subsided somewhat shortly after one o'clock, when the supposed pro-Boer, a truly pitiable sight, emerged from his premises and repaired to his private house. He was observed in the afternoon riding his bicycle down London Road away from the scene of his troubles, and it is generally believed his family also left the town. Passing the place of action between one and two o'clock was an unpleasant, although amusing experience. One of the upstairs window panes was broken, and adhering to the shop front and walls of the house were great lumps of the bad margarine already mentioned, while the pavement was also strewn with it. Exposed as this was to the heat of the sun, it constituted a horrible mess, and gave off a most offensive smell.

Considering it a picture well worth preserving a local amateur photographed it in the afternoon. The crowd carried their disapproval to a further pitch in the evening, but of this later on.

It ought to be stated in justice to Mr Hedges that he asserts the flags had not been intentionally discoloured, but having got wet on a previous occasion the red had run into the white and so been the cause of all the bother.

Throughout the day nothing was talked of but the relief of Baden-Powell and his gallant men, and the strained feeling everywhere apparent during the preceding week gave place to a cheerfulness not equalled by any other

piece of good news received from the front since the commencement of the war. There were those who worked throughout the day in arranging a public demonstration for the evening, and although the time was limited a capital programme was got up, which, had it not been for the rioting that occurred, would have constituted an admirable rejoicing.

The first part of the proceedings was quite a success, being a procession round the town which started at 8:30 from the King's Arms Hotel. The fire engine "Princess May", with several firemen in uniform, was at the head, being followed by the local company of the Church Lads' Brigade, who, by the way, looked very smart and marched nicely. After them came a string of cyclists and others, each carrying a lighted torch. Several of the bicycles were decorated in various ways, some being adorned with the lighted Chinese lanterns, while others displayed cards containing such expressions as "Good old Mafeking" and "Cheers for Roberts". Miniatures of Baden-Powell were common.

Next came a van containing a box covered with a Union Jack and surmounted by a gun of local manufacture. A gentleman in uniform stood by as guard. The idea of the promoters was to represent the tomb of Uncle Paul covered by the good old colours, but ere the van had proceeded very far its occupants became more numerous, and the supposed remains of poor Kruger were very much sat upon. Long before the parade was completed this van was crowded to the utmost, its occupants yelling national airs en route at the top of their voices and one of them applying a concertina with great vigour, although its notes were completely drowned in the uproar. A gentleman on a tricycle disguised in clothes of many colours was waited on with assiduity, and although his false face was black its white whiskers gave a suspicion of Kruger, and he was lustily hooted in consequence.

In this form the town was perambulated amidst a veritable hubbub of excitement and national song, peals being meanwhile run on the church bells. Bombs exploded at frequent intervals, and the blacksmiths were busy with their anvils – in fact there has been sounds as of a bombardment throughout the day. The streets ultimately emptied their crowds of people into the Market Square, which was filled to its utmost capacity not only with the residents of Bicester, but with great numbers of visitors from the villages.

The van formerly mentioned was drawn up as a platform in preparation for speeches and songs, the chair been taken by Mr T. Grimsley. A gentleman with a cornet started the singing of "God Save the Queen", which was rendered with the greatest zest, so much so that the Chairman had difficulty in securing an audience for his opening speech. This, although brief, was appropriate, and afterwards Miss Brabant sang "The Absent-minded Beggar".

The Vicar (Rev. G.P. Crawford), addressing the crowd as "fellow citizens of the British Empire", said they had met to voice the feelings they felt at the news received that day,

and which had stirred the heart of the Empire to its very depths. Mafeking had been relieved! (Loud cheering). The event for which they had longed and prayed had come at last (renewed cheers) and that little garrison, that heroic band of British men which for 216 days had held out with characteristic pluck amidst famine and disaster and the wiles of a crafty and malicious foe, had been relieved. For Colonel Baden-Powell and his heroic little garrison he asked them to give three cheers. God save the Queen; God bless their country; and all honour to Colonel Baden-Powell and his brave men.

Cheer upon cheer was given in response to this request, and after they had died away the chairman called on Mr F. Clifton to sing, but unfortunately he was a distance away and did not hear. This caused the lull in the proceedings which proved fatal to the whole affair, more especially to the window of Mr Hedges' shop. A substitute was found after a while who sang "The Union Jack of Old England", the chorus of which appealed so much to a few of the crowd who had injudiciously imbibed too much alcoholic liquor that when Mr Clifton did turn up the Chairman was unable to restore order.

One man went up to another to make him hold his peace, the result being that fists were doubled and some blows exchanged. The attention of the crowd immediately went from the van to the men who were quarrelling, one of them being taken into custody by the police. Someone subsequently procured his release, and the crowd being then opposite the jeweller's window attention went from the men to it, all interest being lost in the programme which had been arranged. Several of the police from the villages were on duty in the town, and not without a tussle with the mob – four of them once been down together – they managed to keep a clear space just in front of the shop, but from the sides and along the curb-stone there was a human wall, and from the crowd stones kept dropping on the windows with steady regularity, a great cheer bursting forth every time a fresh smash was heard.

This was kept up till an early hour on Sunday morning, the two upstairs windows being badly smashed at the finish, whilst the shop window and that in the door were so entirely demolished that there was nothing in the world to prevent anyone going inside and helping themselves to whatever valuables they pleased. The police, however, were on the watch, and when daylight came workmen arrived with boards and nailed up the front. A fancy glass sign, some ornamental glass lettering along the bottom of the window, a fancy lamp overhead, and a gas-lettering arrangement were also damaged. In short the place was all but completely wrecked. In vain did the party in the van endeavour to get attention; in vain were two or three songs and a recitation rendered; in vain was the speech of the Rev. T.H. Norton, who spoke of the Relief of Mafeking as one of the greatest events in the history of the nation, and made a really patriotic and interesting address. Certain of the crowd did remain near the van, but it was ultimately given up as a bad job, concluding as it had opened with the National Anthem.

We have given it as our opinion that the quarrel was the upstart of it all, and still feel confident that had it not occurred the rejoicings would terminated as orderly and enthusiastically as they began. We quite believe, nevertheless that it was a settled thing to smash the window, but are inclined to think that attention would not have turned in that direction until the other proceedings terminated, which would have been a little more creditable than upsetting the arranged programme. The affair can hardly be called a riot, but at the same time it will turn all eyes on Bicester for awhile.

Supposing the general contention that the flags were purposely disfigured to be correct we fear that little sympathy can be expected by the victim for doing so absurd a thing at the time when public feeling is so distinctly united. But we also feel that had the crowd been satisfied to stop at plastering the man and his house with bad margarine it would have been quite a sufficient expression of disapproval, without going to the extreme of damaging property – an action, by the way, which it is said will be no loss to the man it was intended to injure.

An amusing sequel to the affair is the fact that it was discovered yesterday morning a large board had been nailed onto the other boards containing the words “I am converted” in red and blue lettering on a background of white, whilst above the remainder of the sign a board surmounted by a crown had been placed, bearing the words “God save the Queen” upon it. It is of course questionable as to who is responsible for the sequel, but it is stated by some that the jeweller himself was seen near the house, hammer in hand, at an early hour of the morning. If his statement as to the colour running is correct, then he is an injured man, but if it is otherwise he cannot be pitied and we hope with all sincerity that his conversion is really a fact.

17th May 1940

MEETING THE PARACHUTE MENACE

The clerical staff at Bicester Police Station were kept busily engaged all day on Wednesday enrolling volunteers for the Local Defence Corp, following the broadcast announcement in Tuesday’s 9pm news bulletin by Mr Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, of its formation.

The response locally was excellent, and on Wednesday the total enrolments in the Bicester Police District was as follows: Bicester 98, Finmere 2, Blackthorn nil, Middleton Stoney 6, Islip 18, Weston-on-the-Green 13, Kidlington 47. We understand that volunteers are still coming forward in good numbers, but further figures were not available at time of going to press.

The menace of the parachute jumper is to be met by the creation of this force, and there is no doubt the decision has not been taken a moment too soon. The experience of the Netherlands has taught us that the Nazi parachute troops are heavily armed and desperate soldiers, and to cope with them ex-soldiers with a knowledge of firearms are especially suitable. We cannot have too many to guard our factories, airfields and communications.

The new force, to be called the Local Defence Volunteers, will be a great spare-time army of men between 17 and 65 years of age. They will wear uniform and carry arms. Members will receive no pay. Training will be arranged for the convenience of volunteers, including night workers, so as not to interfere with a man’s normal job. Seventeen-year-olds and others under military age will be allowed to serve until they become of age for service with the Forces.

The volunteers, while supplementing the Regular Army at home Defence troops, will be a separate body with a distinctive uniform. Already the vital coastal areas are protected, but there are many small towns, scattered villages and isolated areas where the new force will be most needed. Men are not wanted in the big cities.

Mr Anthony Eden, War Minister, in his radio speech, said the danger from parachutists, “although it undoubtedly exists”, should not be exaggerated. Preparations had already been made to deal with this Nazi menace, but nothing was being left to chance.

28th May 1980

HOLIDAY PRAM RACE WAS A CROWD-PULLER

More than a thousand spectators lined the streets of Bicester to watch the annual holiday pram race. The winners of the event were the Kings Head “A” team, comprising Paddy Britton, Rennie Reynolds and Mudge Mundy.

The sponsored race was run to raise money for the Flying Fox adventure playground, Bicester, and Flying Fox T-shirts were presented to the winners.

The children’s race was won by Sharon Leslie, who was dressed as a rag doll, and Alison Houlihan, as Tweedle Dee, who took turns in pushing the pram. Unlike the adults, they didn’t have to stop at the White Lion, Kings Head and Red Lion for pints of beer along the way!

The event, which raised £40, was organised by Graham Kelly, chairman of the Flying Fox playground, and Malcolm Payne, warden.



Children’s class winners, Alison Houlihan (left) and Sharon Leslie.

Roll of Honour

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

Flight Sergeant John Bland Horner, of Bicester.

Died: 12th May 1940 Aged: 24 Served in: Royal Air Force

Private William George Lambourne, of Bicester.

Died: 17th May 1940 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Aircraftman Thomas McClenaghan, of Enniskillen, Northern Ireland.

Died: 17th May 1940 Aged: 20 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Bicester, buried at Caversfield)

Private William Maxwell Faulkner, of Somerton.

Died: 19th May 1940 Aged: 20 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Private Ronald Jaycock, of Fewcott.

Died: 19th May 1940 Aged: 18 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Lance Corporal Arthur Ayris, of Bicester.

Died: 28th May 1940 Aged: 28 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Pilot Officer Rupert Chatham Frost, of Woldingham, Surrey.

Died: 28th May 1940 Aged: 26 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Upper Heyford)

Driver William Byng, of Bicester.

Died: 29th May 1940 Aged: 33 Served in: Royal Army Medical Corps

Pilot Officer Guy Lewis Hickman, of Bicester.

Died: 31st May 1940 Aged: 19 Served in: Royal Air Force

Pilot Officer Basil Simpson.

Died: 2nd June 1940 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Upper Heyford)

Private Charles Frederick Grace, of Bicester.

Died: 8th June 1940 Aged: 21 Served in: Ox & Bucks Light Infantry

Pilot Officer George Andrew Atkinson, of Blackrock, Ireland.

Died: 13th June 1940 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Middleton Stoney)

Aircraftman James Lennon.

Died: 13th June 1940 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Middleton Stoney)

Flying Officer John Edmund Seaton MacAlister, of Tonbridge, Kent.

Died: 13th June 1940 Aged: 27 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Upper Heyford)

Pilot Officer Edgar Albert Ernest Sedgley, of Christchurch, New Zealand.

Died: 13th June 1940 Aged: 22 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried at Middleton Stoney)

Leading Aircraftman Davis Hewson Reed, of Ilford, Essex.

Died: 21st June 1940 Aged: 53 Served in: Royal Air Force
(Died on service at RAF Bicester, buried at Caversfield)



Bicester, From a Brook Fighting the Fires

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

A syringe, or squirt, manipulated by hand, was the earliest form of fire extinguisher known in Bicester, apart from the use of a bucket. The squirt was about three feet in length, with an aperture at the lower end of about half an inch in diameter, and a capacity of about half a gallon. It had a handle on each side and was worked by three men, of whom two held the squirt by the handles and the nozzle, while the third worked a piston inside it in the manner of a syringe. The aperture was held downwards in a tub of water whilst the squirt was being filled, and when filled, the nozzle was pointed upwards, and the stream of water directed on the burning building by the working of the piston.

The first fire engine, used about the year 1560, consisted of a water-cistern, seven or eight feet long drawn on a kind of sledge. As our illustration shows, it had levers, worked by twenty or thirty men who pumped from the machine a stream of water an inch in diameter, to a height of eighty feet.



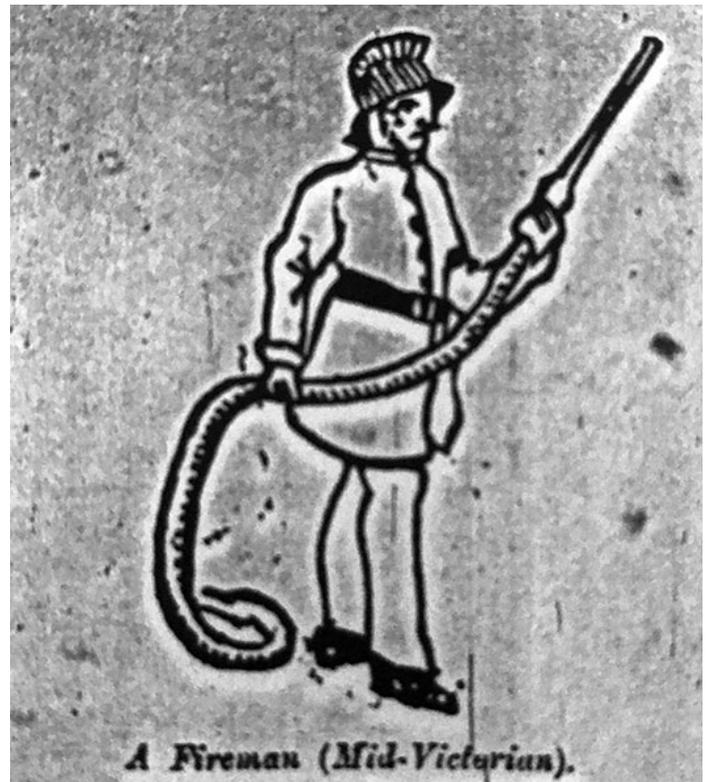
One of the firemen is seen in the picture holding the nozzle upwards, and standing on the perforated cover of the cistern, into which another man is pouring water from a leather bucket. A century later came the first hose, which has ever since formed part of the fittings of a fire-engine.

By the middle of the reign of Queen Victoria the

fireman's smoke-proof dress had been invented; a leather jacket and head piece into which fresh air could be pumped through a pipe.

The first fire of which there is any record in local history occurred in 1678, and this was due to lightning in a storm on April 20th. Barns and outhouses were burnt, many cattle destroyed, and at one time it was feared that the outbreak would involve the whole town.

The Congregational Church stands on the site where the worst conflagration the town has yet known took place in 1724. Ten houses were gutted, besides warehouses, a malt house, stables and outhouses extending in the rear of the premises on the south side of the Market Square. Stores of many kinds went up in smoke and the damage was calculated at about £2,230. So great was the loss that a public subscription fund was opened in the town and district in aid of all who had suffered by it. This fire led to the establishment of North Street at the other end of the town, where the "New Buildings" were erected at the end of Sheep Street.

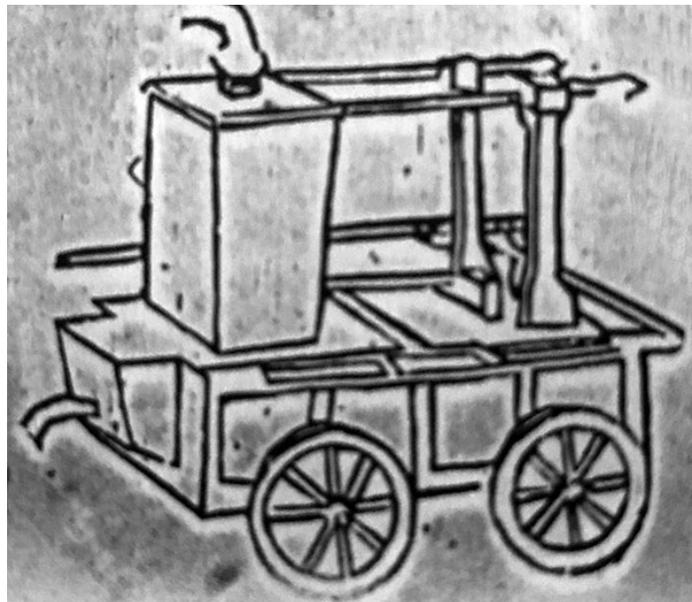


The earliest note of fire-fighting appliances in Bicester is an item in the Parish Officer's accounts of having paid £11 for six leather buckets in 1714. At a later date two manual engines were kept in a barn on the Launton Road, and hurdles were also made on these premises at the same time. One of the engines was without wheels, and if it had to go any distance it was necessary to secure it in a van which was kept in the King's Head barn. By dint of much exertion, and probably a considerable amount of profanity, the engine was hoisted into the van by means of skids or pulleys, the horses were hitched in front and off they went. On one occasion, in the scramble of getting away, the man in charge omitted to secure the engine in

the van, with the result that the outfit had not proceeded very far before the engine bumped into the road again.

Some years ago after a Brigade had attended a fire on the Bucknell Road, by which a "quiet little homestead" was destroyed on a Sunday, a false alarm followed on the next day. When the cry was raised "a fire at Wendlebury" the Local Board was sitting and the Superintendent of the Board, had to leave hurriedly to don a uniform. For a time all was excitement, till the announcement of "false alarm" was made. The incident is said to have originated from a man galloping on horseback through King's End for a veterinary surgeon, and the existence of a refuse fire in the direction of Wendlebury.

The later type of manual engine depicted here is similar in design to Bicester's ancient possession, except that the latter has cheese-wheels.



Bygone Bicester - June (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

23rd June 1860

THE STORM ON WEDNESDAY

The amount of rain collected in rain gauges at Bicester, on Wednesday last, the 20th inst., from 9am to 9pm, was nearly 2 inches, viz. 1 in. 8 tenths. This is an extraordinary quantity to fall in the space of twelve hours. There has been no such fall of rain in the same space of time since meteorological observations have been registered in Bicester, a period of seven years.

Since Wednesday this neighbourhood has been in many parts under water, and floods on the highways are in some instances so deep as to be impassable with safety.

Mrs Jones, her daughter, and Miss Tapping of Marsh Gibbon, narrowly escaped drowning on Wednesday night in going home from Bicester, in a gig. The road under the railway bridge near Marsh is very low and, their being no outlet for the water, the flood was deep.

The horse lost its footing, overturned the gig, and all the ladies were precipitated into the water, which was nearly 6 feet deep. Fortunately their cries were heard by some labourers nearby, who came and got them out of the flood.

8th June 1900

CHURCH LADS' BRIGADE OUTING

The members of the Bicester company of the Church Lads' Brigade spent a very enjoyable day on Whit-Monday. Assembling at headquarters (St Edburg's Hall) at 11:45am the company marched to the parish church, where a short service was held, after which they were photographed outside the west door of the church.

They then fell in outside the Vicarage, and headed by an improvised drum and fife band, commenced a march to Middleton Park, followed by a "convoy" of provisions for the outing. One or two halts for refreshments were made on the way, and Middleton Park was reached about

1:30pm.

The company was met by the Rev. W.H. Draper, and after luncheon the boys were introduced to him. He then delivered an address, as also did Mr W.D. Little, who welcomed them in the name of Lord Jersey.

Various games were played during the afternoon, and about four o'clock the assembly was sounded, the company leaving the park by the Oxford road gate and marching to Chesterton to the residence of Mr H. Tubb.

Here it was found tables had been prepared in the garden, and a hearty welcome was extended to the officers and boys by Mr, Mrs and the Misses Tubb. The Rev. A. Welsh was also present. Tea was partaken of and some company drills performed. The boys afterwards dispersed and were allowed to play in the gardens, whilst some took part in a cricket match in front of the house.

The march home was started about 7:30pm, the company being dismissed at headquarters, after what everyone agreed had been a most pleasurable holiday.

21st June 1940

EVACUEES ARRIVE AT BICESTER

London evacuees, previously scheduled for Bicester, arrived with their teachers on the G.W.R. on Sunday afternoon to the number of about 800. They were met by Mr T.W. Liddington and Councillor A.F. Lambourne (evacuation officer and reception officer respectively for the Bicester urban area) and Mr E.K. Truman (evacuation and chief billeting officer for the Ploughley area), Mr F. Wise (chairman of the Ploughley evacuation committee), and a host of helpers. In addition to the regular police, eight special constables were on duty to assist in the control of traffic and safe transit of the children.

Two hundred children had been scheduled for Bicester, and of these about 180 arrived. They were taken to the Junior CofE School for medical examination and distributed from there and the Congregational schoolroom to their billets. All were eventually housed,

and during the week necessary adjustments have been made.

Ploughley's contingent of about 600 were marshalled at Mr Kelly's stables in Buckingham Road, and from there were conveyed by bus and car to the billets allotted to them in the surrounding villages.

On Tuesday, a further batch of 800 evacuees arrived at Bicester, and all but 50 were expeditiously distributed in the rural area. The remaining 50, part of the personnel of a Roman Catholic school, were accommodated in the town.

On Saturday last 40 children arrived at Oxford, en route for Horton-cum-Studley, and Mr E.K. Truman supervised their removal. Thus Ploughley received very few short of their quota of 1,550 children.

4th June 1980

KIRTLINGTON'S THREE DAYS OF FESTIVAL

Kirtlington Lamb Ale Feast grew into a three-day celebration this year and the villagers were entertained by their own morris men for the first time in 50 years. The feast, accompanied by freely-flowing ale, was held in Kirtlington village hall on Monday, and was preceded by two days of song, dance and merrymaking. In the past the revelry has lasted just a day.

Kirtlington has one of the oldest morris dancing traditions in England, and a visiting morris man, Paul Davenport, from Tickhill, Doncaster, encouraged the locals to get their own team together again. Folk enthusiasts Len and Barbara Berry raised a team and trained them with the help of Adderbury Morris Men. Among the spectators was 69-year-old Mr Ernie King, who used to organise the feast and was one of the morris



team in the 1920s.

The celebrations included a procession through the village, with nine girls dressed as the traditional village maidens, carrying lamb pies. At the original feast, founded in 1562, the girls had to chase a lamb, with their hands tied behind their backs, and the one who caught it with her teeth was made Queen of the feast.

A special service, conducted by the vicar, the Rev. George Bennett, attracted a congregation of 300, and an exhibition on the history of the feast was held in the school. Clog dancing, country dancing and morris dancing by teams from all over Oxfordshire took place on the green, and a fair was set up in the village.

The celebrations ended on Monday evening with a cricket match between Kirtlington and Merton College Mayflies.

The organiser of the feast was Mr Bob Edgington, whose father "Smoker" Edgington had revived the feast after the war along with Ernie King and 76-year-old Bert Collett, who was attending his 62nd Lamb Ale.

Among the representatives of the younger generation were Neville and Timothy Pearman, whose ancestors had been morris men for centuries before.



Organisers past and present, Ernie King (left) and Bob Edgington.

Talks Update

As the coronavirus lockdown and social distancing continues we are continuing to follow the government's instructions and our programme of talks remains suspended until it is considered safe for public gatherings to resume. We will keep you informed as the situation develops.

Mick Wall

We're saddened to report the recent death of Mick Wall, a long-standing and very popular member of BLHS.

Although born in Warwickshire, Mick was very much a local lad, having moved to Bicester at the age of seven years. He lived at Slade Cottages on the Bucknell Road, the home of his grandparents. His school days were spent at St Mary's RC School and the County

School, after which he gained an apprenticeship at Pressed Steel and worked there until his retirement.

Mick played cricket and football for Bicester Town, being captain of the football club's reserve team. He was a well-regarded sportsman, but his other claim to fame was being the designer of the football club's badge. His memories of his childhood, whether it was his

time in the Civil Defence during WW2 or his Saturday job as a delivery boy for Mrs Godfrey's sweet shop, always enlivened our oral history sessions and made a significant contribution to our DVD. He played a big part in the society's success over many years, for which we're



immensely grateful; it was our pleasure to make him and Wendy honorary members when they retired from the committee. He will be missed by many members and friends.

I have very fond memories of Mick and his generous hospitality at our committee meetings at his and Wendy's home. The joy of sitting in his beautiful garden, which he tended with such skill, remains with me.

Our sincere condolences go to Wendy and her family.

- Sally James



Mick with other members of the Society campaigning for a museum in 1995

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