



Issue: 82 November 2021

# Bicester Historian

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

## Return to the Old Ways

Well, almost.

This month we held our first face-to-face talk since Mark Lawrence came to tell us about the *Picture Oxon Project* back in February 2020. Initially we just suspended everything and waited on further government advice. But eventually we felt we needed to start providing something for our members, if only to stop them going crazy with cabin fever. So we followed the example of many similar organisations and started to host our monthly talks online, via the popular Zoom platform. A system the committee also adopted for their monthly committee meetings.

The first of these online talk was given by Bob Hessian in March 2021, when he talked about the history of dovecotes. This "test" confirmed that this format would work for us and it was well received. Since then we have had *The Production, Distribution and Use of Salt in Prehistoric Britain* by Dr Janice Kinory, *Straight Joints and Curved Braces* by Heather Horner, *The History of Tooley's Boatyard* by Matthew Armitage, *Wychwood Forest and Cornbury Park from the Middle Ages* by Simon Townley, and *Art as Historical Evidence* by Jane Card. These too were all very popular, and certainly helped to keep us ticking over, but nothing quite beats the full experience of meeting in person. We also felt that we were still neglecting those members who, for whatever reason, couldn't take part in the online talks.

After much deliberation the committee eventually decided to



resume our face to face meetings, at least for a trial period, with the appropriate social distancing measures in place. Liz Woolley, pictured above, was happy to speak in person and so November was chosen for our return to the Clifton Centre. We felt it best not to provide any refreshments or hold a raffle, and this will continue to be the case until it is felt safe and appropriate for us to start offering them again. The hall has ample space so spreading out the seating wasn't an issue. The whole evening was very successful and we are happy to continue meetings like this, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

For those members who couldn't attend, or didn't feel safe to do so, the write up of the talk will be included in next month's newsletter, as always, but we also recorded a video of the talk and have made it available, for members only, on our website. You can watch it on there as much as you'd like until the 19th December, but you will first need to register for access. We have tried to make the registration process as painless as possible though, and we also plan to add other "members

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### Dates For Your Diary

Bicester Advertiser Local History Article

*2nd December*

December Newsletter Submission Deadline

*5th December*

BLHS Christmas Event

*20th December @ 7:30pm*

*See page 3*

only" content, as well as all our future talks. Simply:

1. Go to: [www.blhs.org.uk](http://www.blhs.org.uk)
2. Click on "Members Area"
3. Click "Signup for Access"
4. Fill in the form (using the email address you gave us when you joined).
5. Once you have clicked the link in the confirmation email you can return to the Members Area and log in with the email address and password you registered.
6. Then, under "Meetings & Events", you'll find a new menu called "Watch Recent Talks".

In there will be listed any of the talk videos we currently have available, as well as a copy of our first DVD for anyone who couldn't get a physical copy back in 2013.

*- Matthew Hathaway*

## 30th November 1861

### CONSECRATION OF THE NEW CEMETERY

On Monday last the consecration of the New Cemetery took place, the Right Rev. The Lord Bishop of Oxford performing the ceremony. The day was very unfavourable, wind and rain having succeeded the sharp frost of the previous evening. However, a large number of persons assembled to witness the ceremony.

The service was commenced at half-past one, in the parish church, by the vicar, the Rev. J.W. Watts, reading the litany, after which the Bishop preached a short and impressive sermon, from 1st Corinthians, XV, 26. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

After the sermon, the Rev. J.W. Watts, as chairman of the Burial Board, read a petition to the Bishop, requesting him to consecrate the ground, after which, the Bishop's Registrar, J.M. Davenport, Esq., read the sentence of consecration. This done, a procession was then formed, headed by the Bishop, of the following clergymen of the neighbourhood, Rev. J.C. Blomfield, Rural Dean, Rev. J.W. Watts, Vicar, and the Revs. J. Tweed, J. Lowe, W.J. Dry, M. Style, W.F. Fortescue, C. Marsham, C. Coker, F. Salter, W. Master, W.L. Brown, C. Guest, and J.M. Davenport, Esq.

The procession proceeded from the church, through the churchyard, to the cemetery, where it passed round that portion of the cemetery set apart for the use of the established church, the Bishop and the congregation alternately reciting the 49th and 115th Psalms. The procession having again arrived at the gate leading to the churchyard, the Bishop read the prayer provided in the consecration service, and having pronounced the benediction the assembly separated.

The Bishop and Clergy present at the ceremony, with a number of the leading parishioners specially invited, afterwards sat down to lunch at the vicarage.

After the consecration, at the earnest request of the Vicar, the Bishop met some of the more influential parishioners to speak to them on the subject of restoring their parish church. The Vicar laid before the meeting his wishes and plans, which his Lordship, with his usual kindness, supported. Mr C. Fowler warmly seconded the proposals of the Vicar. Mr Jonas Paxton urged, in a kindly spirit, some objections, which were withdrawn, after a thorough explanation by his Lordship.

We are happy to state that the object of the meeting was completely attained. The Vicar has pledged himself to endeavour to obtain by subscriptions and grants from societies, the sum of £1,500, provided the parish will meet him with £500. There is very little doubt of success if the parishioners will only second the plans of their

worthy Vicar. Steps will be taken to secure this end, and we hope at no distant date to see our venerable parish church rendered one of the finest in the diocese. At the close of the meeting nearly 100 guineas were subscribed.

## 6th November 1896

### SERIOUS FIRE PREVENTED

On Tuesday last, in consequence of the foulness of the chimney of one of the residents of the cottages in Mr Buckle's yard, in Sheep Street, the sparks set fire to the thatched roof, and had not timely aid been near the result would have been serious. Fortunately Mr Charles King was thatching the roof of a barn at the rear of the Angel Inn and noticed the fire, and having a ladder near he at once ascended the roof and poured water on the burning thatch, which was quickly extinguished, and through such timely aid very little damage was done.

## 15th November 1918

### THE END OF THE WAR

After extending over a period of more than four years, the great war came to an end at eleven o'clock on Monday morning. The news that Germany had at length been crushed, and, more than that, forced to confess utter defeat, was received all over England with feelings of joy, pride, and thanksgiving. Never before in the history of Bicester - the little town that has so generously contributed its share towards the great achievements - has such excitement prevailed as was the case on Monday.

All the morning people paraded the streets awaiting the arrival of the news which everyone felt sure was coming, and rumours were current quite early - some time before an official announcement was made. However, shortly before twelve o'clock an official message which had been dispatched from London less than an hour earlier reached the Advertiser office announcing that the armistice had been signed at five o'clock that morning, and that hostilities ceased at eleven.

Then the rejoicings commenced. Flags were hoisted, children decorated themselves with flags and bunting, the bells of the Parish Church rang forth a merry peal, and men ran here and there with expressions such as they had never worn for more than four long years. Very little work was done that afternoon. No one seemed to think of it; the one idea was to be out and about. During the afternoon handbills were circulated informing the townsfolk that the Urban District Council would make an official announcement on the Market Square at four o'clock.

Several hundred people assembled to hear the

official announcement. The members of the Council present were: Mr W. Malins (Vice-Chairman), Mr S.F. Smith, Mr W.J. French, Mr J.W. Evans, Mr F.R.H. White, and the Clerk (Mr Fred Hudson). The churches in the town were represented by Rev. W. O'Reilly (Church of England), Rev. C.H. Rose (Wesleyan), Rev T. Smith (Congregational) and Rev. Father Permasse (Roman Catholic).

Mr Malins read the following letter from the Chairman of the Council (Mr J.T. Mountain) who was unable to be present:

"Fellow Townsman, I am extremely sorry that through illness I am not able to be present to personally announce in my official capacity the welcome news of the signing of the armistice, the preliminary step to the inauguration of universal peace. I am sure everyone present feels what a glorious thing it is to be alive to witness the great triumph of right over might. The blood of our heroes has not been shed in vain. May I appeal to you not to allow your rejoicings to be marred by any unseen excesses."

Mr Malins then said on the authority of that letter the Council had thought it wise to call the meeting that they might officially announce that an armistice was signed by the representatives of Germany. This meant the downfall of that arch-hypocrite the late Kaiser, Wilhelm (cheers). He then proceeded to speak of the horrors of the war and general relief and feelings of thanksgiving shared by all at the news of the cessation of hostilities. He spoke of those who would shortly be returning and of those who had died for their country and were then lying in a distant land. The friends of the latter, he said, could not rejoice with us, and he asked that nothing should be done in excess as there were hearts that were still sad. He thought the time was near when there would be a better peace and a better England than before. He then formally declared that an armistice had been signed, and added that the dawn of peace was already appearing above the horizon (cheers).

The Rev O'Reilly, in re-echoing the words of Mr Malins, said it was difficult even at a time like that to express joy. It seemed almost too hard to believe after what had happened in the early spring. There would be an opportunity to give vent to their feelings at a later date, when peace was declared. He could say no more then, his heart was too full.

The Rev. Smith said a sad note was struck when war was declared, and it had brought sadness in thousands of homes in England and other parts of the world. He asked that in the rejoicings there should be thoughtfulness. Referring to Germany, he said he wondered what the Kaiser thought that day. It would be remembered that in the early days of the war the Kaiser referred in contemptuous terms to "our contemptible little army". Throughout the whole of the dark days that

had been he (the speaker) never for a moment had any doubts of final victory (applause).

The Rev. Father Permasse said he was a Frenchman, and was born early enough to see France beaten by Germany. Since then his countrymen had smarted under the lash. France and England had been friends for a hundred years, and he hoped they would continue to be for many more centuries (cheers).

The Rev. Rose said he looked with hope on what appeared to be the beginning of a glorious future. He thanked God and our men for the great achievement that has been attained.

Mr Hudson said when last he had the honour of addressing the inhabitants on the Market Square the subject was war and the continuance of war. He then asked wives to send their husbands, mothers their sons, and girls their sweethearts. The appeal was responded to and they saw the result of it that day. The meeting now was called not to speak of war, but of peace. He had been told that the Kaiser was an admirer of Shakespeare. If that was so he made a fatal blunder in not referring to his Shakespeare before embarking on war. Shakespeare wrote "This England never did nor never shall lie at the foot of a proud conqueror" (applause).

It was announced that services would be held in the Parish Church, the Congregational Church, the Wesleyan Church and the Roman Catholic Church on the following day at seven o'clock in the evening. The singing of the Doxology and the National Anthem, and cheers for the Army, Navy, Air Force, France, and America, brought the meeting to a close.

After tea the streets were thronged with people, a large portion of them being soldiers. Children waved flags, indeed it was surprising where all the flags came from. A torchlight procession then proceeded around the town to the accompaniment of shouting and singing. By ten o'clock, however, the streets were all cleared and everything was quiet.

#### **4th November 1938**

##### **THE BICESTER BOYS CLUB**

The Bicester Boys' Club, in Victoria Road, is making steady progress, and is a really great benefit to the youth of the town. During recent weeks there has been a steady increase in membership, and many new activities have commenced.

Although not of spacious dimensions, the club room houses many pastimes for the boys. There is a library, in which much interest is taken, and in this room, also, table games are played and conferences by the football committee take place. The centre room is used for table tennis, bagatelle, darts, etc, and one corner is devoted to boxing. At this latter sport several of the boys show promise, and the bouts each club night are both

numerous and interesting. Frequent tournaments are arranged for table tennis, and it is hoped to engage other boys' clubs at this particular pastime.

As the club progresses, so will it be possible to add to its amenities. Football has to be confined to Thursdays, it being impossible to raise a Saturday side. The club has been fortunate enough to secure a pitch close to the old smallpox hospital, and the marking of the ground, the erection of the goalposts, and the general arrangements have been accomplished by the members themselves. The club colours are blue and white stripes. The first match took place yesterday week, at Oxford, where, against a much heavier and more experienced side, the Bicester boys were defeated. But the result mattered little to the team, who thoroughly enjoyed the game and who, when they have played together more, should do much better.

### 13th November 1975

FULL-TIME BINGO FOR THE REGAL



The Bicester Regal cinema and bingo hall is to close as a cinema at the end of this month and become a full-time bingo hall.

Mr David Issacs, managing director of Zetters Enterprises Ltd, which owns the Regal, said the plans for the change of use were submitted to the fire authorities last Wednesday and although nothing definite would be known for about a week, the cinema would cease showing films after the end of this month.

He said the Bicester Regal would become a full-time bingo hall subject to the approval of the plans by the fire authorities.

“Twenty thousand pounds will be spent on modernisation of the Regal, including £5000 on new

seating alone. The place is in a terrible state,” he said.

The Regal, which opened in 1934, was taken over by Zetters from EMI early last month and operates as a cinema for four days a week and as a bingo hall for the rest of the week.

This was the second change of ownership this year. EMI took it over from the Star Group in February of this year as part of a deal involving 140 bingo halls.

Mr Isaacs said he wished it was possible to keep the cinema in Bicester but it was a question of how to get the best financial return, and that, he said, would not be achieved by keeping the cinema.

### 13th November 1975

IT'S NOT THE END OF THE ROAD...YET

Bicester's road to nowhere is going somewhere – eventually. The new inner link road, costing over £200,000, starts at the Causeway and at the moment stops well short of its scheduled other end of St John's Street.

Work is going on to surface the section of road already built and the big new car park behind Sheep Street. But the service road round the car park is only three-quarters complete because it has to await finishing the whole inner road, which will be called Manorsfield Road.

Mr Brian Doe, chief engineer to Cherwell District Council, said they were finalising the contract for the contractors to carry out the second phase of the road.

The whole road should be completed in the current financial year that ends on 1st April.

Mr Doe said he was hopeful a pedestrian walk-way from the car park to Sheep Street would be open at the same time as the car park. The pedestrian access would come out next to the Memory Lane card shop.



## Talks Update

December's meeting won't be a talk. It will be held at the Clifton Centre on the **20th December, at 7:30pm**. As in previous years (not

counting 2020!) we plan to hold a more social event, with either a quiz, some readings, or a video to watch. Maybe even all three. The

exact content isn't yet confirmed, but details will be announced nearer the time.

## Bicester Aerodrome?



Last week I acquired two boxes of glass slides – thirty-five of them in total – these being the black and white negatives from a plate camera. There were no obvious hints as to who and where the photographs had been taken, apart from an actual print (see right) which had

“Mr Horwood from Caversfield House” written on the back but no date!

I did wonder whether any such buildings would have been erected on the site of the Bicester airfield, it being close to Caversfield. However, the type of aircraft (Bleriot) and the

name Grahame White on the buildings, led me (via Google!) to Claude Grahame-White who built an aircraft manufacturing plant and aerodrome at Hendon, NW London. This is now the site of the RAF Museum London. Their website showing the history of the site does have a couple of photographs of the above wooden buildings. And it is Claude Graham-White who is sitting in the aircraft.

Whilst I was typing this article onto my laptop, I received a ‘phone call from the person who gave me the pictures, who was able to tell me that William and Annie Horwood are the couple in the photograph, and they lived in the grounds of Caversfield House. He was an invalid, and they would use the pony and cart to go to London taking 3 days for the journey with William in the buggy/cart and Annie walking alongside!!! An intriguing story and maybe Hendon Museum might enlarge more on the photograph.



There are other photographs which I recognise as being Caversfield cottages and farm buildings along with a few pictures of the residents. The corrugated iron cottage, shown on the previous page, was lived in by the person who gave me the pictures, although the building is no longer there.



However, there are other photographs – of Bicester – and I’ve included some of them here.

Above shows the buildings at the “Top of the Town” – where the Banbury Road and Buckingham Road join Field Street. It shows the road being widened and the new buildings in Field Street being constructed – currently numbers 6-8, and 10-12. The thatched buildings on the left were associated with an area called Rope Walk. The notice on the white board informs

people that Layton and Sons are the builders. Laytons also constructed Bath, Newport and Manchester Terraces in Victoria Road and some of the properties down Priory Road.

Finally, the picture below is of Market Square, on what looks like a rainy day, and with sheep looking on!

The carriers cart in the background is that of John Cooper from Murcott. More to follow once I get the other glass slides separated and cleaned.

- Bob Hessian



# Roll of Honour

*The following are the local men, and those buried locally, who died in the Second World War, 80 years ago.*

**Lieutenant Hugh Chesterman**, of Islip.

Died: 3rd November 1941    Aged: 57    Served in: Royal Berkshire Regiment

**Sergeant Arnold Harvey Stack**, of Vancouver, Canada.

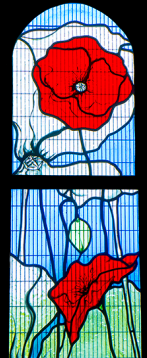
Died: 11th November 1941    Aged: 20    Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force  
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried in Upper Heyford)

**Sergeant John Lenus Yeo**, of Winnipeg, Canada.

Died: 11th November 1941    Aged: 19    Served in: Royal Canadian Air Force  
(Died on service at RAF Upper Heyford, buried in Upper Heyford)

**Marine Richard George Wise**, of Islip.

Died: 25th November 1941    Aged: 31    Served in: Royal Marines - HMS Barham



## Book Review

**To the Warrior His Arms. The Story of Bicester Garrison.** - Lieutenant Colonel L. M. Robinson, R.L.C.

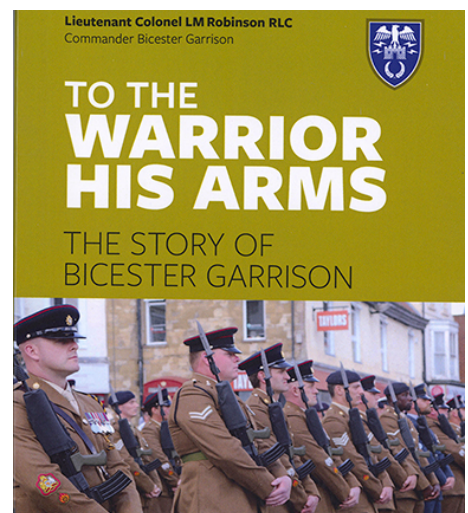
ISBN: 978173989307 (2021). Available from Coles Books.

In acquiring this slim volume, just 82 pages long, the purchaser is really buying two books sharing the same cover. The first, and greater, part is a facsimile reproduction of a book published now almost thirty years ago, in May 1992, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Central Ordnance Depot Bicester and Bicester Garrison, that was produced under the editorial control of Lieut. Col. (RETD) J. P. Connelly. The second part, by the current Commander of the Bicester Garrison, Lieut. Col. L. M. Robinson, takes up the story where its predecessor left off, and carries it on through the formation of the Army Base Storage and Distribution Agency (ABSDA), to the present day.

The Royal Logistics Corps, which currently makes up Bicester's Garrison, was formed on the 5th April 1993 by the amalgamation of the Royal Engineers Postal and Courier Service, the Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps, and the Army Catering Corps. The title of

the book, "To the Warrior His Arms", is a common rendition of the Latin motto of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, "Sua tela tonanti", literally "His [i.e. Jupiter's] Missiles to the one who is Thundering".

As mentioned above, this book takes the reader through, not only the history, from the early days when Bicester was a storage area for equipment for Operation Overlord, but also the geography of the site, and how its scattered appearance, with its several sub-depots at Graven Hill and Arncott, was an attempt to minimise possible air raid damage by the Luftwaffe. This in contrast to the more compact Donnington site, near Telford in Shropshire, which was safely beyond the range of German bombers. Added to this are accounts of the various Army units that have made up Bicester Garrison in the almost eighty years since this latest chapter of the military's relationship with Bicester began. It is a humbling thought that Bicester has been involved and represented wherever in the world the armed



forces of the United Kingdom have served in a military or humanitarian capacity.

The book lacks an index, but at only 82 pages long, does it really need one? It is copiously illustrated throughout, has a useful glossary of military acronyms appearing in the text, and would make a worthy addition to the library of anyone with an interest in the history of Bicester and the town's long-standing relations with the men and women who have the honour of wearing the uniform of Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

- Mark Lewandowski

# War Memorial

The war memorial outside St Edburg's Church was erected in 1921 in memory of those men lost during the First World War. It became the focal point of the town's Armistice Day commemorations every year, such as the Remembrance Service in 1928 shown below.

But by the end of the Second World War its stonework had degraded in places and a new generation of war dead needed to be honoured. So a committee was set up and, by 1947, they were fundraising in earnest to get the work done. Copies of the card shown on the right were distributed throughout the town and the response was extremely positive. So much so that by the time of the service on 11th November 1947 all the required works had been completed.



## BICESTER WAR MEMORIAL.

WE feel that the care of the War Memorial, clearly a matter of interest to all people of Bicester, needs to be put on a more satisfactory footing than it is at the present. One of the stones in the base has perished and needs to be replaced. We also think that it is desirable that the dates 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 should be inscribed on the base. A panel with the names of those who fell in the First World War was erected some 25 years ago in the porch of the Parish Church and clearly those who fell in the Second World War should be similarly commemorated. We have already received a most generous donation of 25 guineas from some members of the Royal Artillery Association resident in Bicester towards this object and we confidently appeal to all Bicester people to contribute what they can. Should more be subscribed than is needed to meet the cost of the suggested repairs and additions to the Memorial, a sum might be placed in the hands of Trustees to ensure that the Memorial is always properly cared for in the future.

Will all those who wish to support this worthy cause kindly send their contributions to The Manager, Barclays Bank Ltd., Bicester, who will acknowledge their receipt.

E. H. WYNDHAM  
T. HUDSON  
C. COWLAND COOPER  
T. FOYNES  
D. M. JONES  
E. R. SCRIVENER  
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