

Changing Things Up

It has now been almost eight years since we changed our newsletter from the quarterly news sheet into the monthly editions of the Bicester Historian that many of you have come to know and enjoy. Dare I say, even look forward to.

But now, as we approach the 90th edition, it seems to be moving further away from its 'newsletter' roots and any actual news items seem to get lost amongst all the old articles and interesting pieces of local history interest. So it's time to rethink the way we do it.

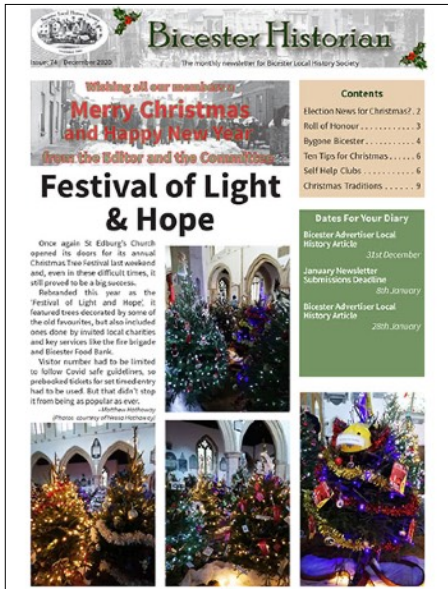
We have decided to split the Bicester Historian into two separate publications. One, a monthly newsletter, will contain all our announcements and news items. The other will continue all the articles and local history items, including the talk write-ups, roll of honour, and Bygone Bicester, as well as some new items and new contributors. This will retain the Bicester Historian name, but will be published quarterly instead of



monthly. The first edition of which (the 90th edition of the Historian) will be out next month.

Hopefully you'll all agree that these changes are for the better, but, as always, we welcome any feedback you may have. We also welcome anything you'd like to contribute; articles, photos, or just interesting bits you'd like to share.

- Matthew Hathaway



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Bicester Advertiser Article	7th July
July Newsletter Submission Deadline	8th July
Shelswell History Festival	16th July
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Career in Ruins Talk	18th July @ 7:30pm
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Q3 Bicester Historian Submission Deadline	22nd July
Bicester Advertiser Article	28th July
August Newsletter Submission Deadline	5th August
Bicester Buildings Walk (3rd date)	7th August

Gavray Meadows

Following eleven years of tireless campaigning, the Friends of Gavray Meadows group can celebrate the news that Gavray Meadows have been saved for the people of Bicester and will provide an invaluable wildlife site on the edge of town. The group has extended its thanks to BLHS members for their support during the planning process.

A Community Interest Company will be set up, whose aim is 'The protection, conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity of Gavray Meadows'. If you are interested in becoming involved, further information is available at www.gavraymeadows.org.

Attendance at a recent exhibition and guided walks included a small number of BLHS members, who benefitted from the extensive knowledge of ecologist Dominic Woodfield, and a sunny day!

We were encouraged to feel that identification of birds by sight or song was possible! A field awash with buttercups was hiding ridge and furrow, and an Anglo-Saxon hedge was thought to have been planted to demark the boundary between Bicester & Launton [pictured]. Trees, wildflowers & grasses, butterflies, birds, a green lane, a dew pond and even orchids gave us a taste of what these acres have to offer.

It puts me in mind of regular trips over Tubbs Crossing and down to the Langford Brook with our children on sunny Sunday afternoons. Those are treasured memories from forty years ago; local residents now have the chance to create their own memories of this amazing wildlife asset.

- Sally James



Bicester's Boer War (Part 4)

Continuing the reminiscences of Lewis Turney.

By the 19th June, Lewis Turney's unit was on the move again; "Left Laing's Nek Sunday 19th June 1900 (9.00 a.m.) on the march & went through Charlestown & Volkrust, both places were not much damaged, crossed the Bufflo [sic] between Charlestown & Volkrust. Leaving Volkrust in the Transvaal, Lewis Turney's unit moved northwest towards Pardekop, Lewis being reminded that he was in the southern hemisphere with the seasons reversed; he mentions a very sharp frost, and it being very cold and foggy, this on the 21st June, the longest day of the year in England. But he did not have time to celebrate the winter solstice as the next

day he was on the move again, arriving at Standerton on the afternoon of the 23rd, "over a bridge cross the Vaal River what Kruger had built in 1891 with Kruger's name on it. The Boer had blown up the central span of the Railway Bridge across the Vaal River. Church parade, 24th June 1900. Standerton Camp, the first train arrived as far as the blown-up bridge Standerton 25th June 1900 at 2 p.m. Our people captured 16 engines at Standerton Station, the mounted infantry I believe. On the morning of the 29th June 1900 we received the order to rill tents & blankets & have them packed on wagons, also strike tents ready to move at 9 a.m. with 9 days rations. Then we received the order

later to wait for orders but we did not move that day. Co[mpan]y on outlying picquet at night came off the morning of the 30th June packed blankets, coats & tents & left Standerton at 9 a.m. Arrived in camp at Watervaal at 2.30 p.m., left Watervaal at 8 a.m. Sunday 1st July the Battalion was advance guard to the 4th B[riga]de. [?] & artillery, the cavalry came into action arrived in camp at 5 p.m. at Vaalsp[?]it. 1 of the Bushmen got killed in action. Left Vaalsp[?]it at 10 a.m. 2nd July 1900 and arrived in camp at Greylingstad at 5.30 p.m. Greylingstad having a gold shaft (mine). Battalion Orderly Sergt. 3rd July 1900, also for outpost duty at night. Moved the camp 2 p.m., 4th July 1900. On supply column fatigue with 50 men July 5th 1900. Morning & afternoon with 25 men unloading wagons & reloading them. Co[mpan]y on escort duty to the commissariat wagons 6th July 1900 went 6 miles out to meet the other escort from the column in advance co[mpan]y for outlying picquet tonight, 7th July 1900 left on observation post with 12 men & a Corporal on a hill overlooking [?] Orange Free State & the hill at Standerton where we are in communication with the Co[mpan]y. Sunday 8th July 1900, rolled coats, blankets & struck tents 8 a.m. & fell in at 9 a.m. ready to move to another camp after parading; received the orders to march back & pitch camp at same place former order cancelled, received the same order in the afternoon again & had to roll coats & blankets & strike camp and move over to the other side of Greylingstad Railway Station overlooking a plain to the West [illegible]. On the 9th July 1900 we had to escort a 5 inch gun towards the north to the column in front and escort a [sic] convoy back to Greylingstad Railway Station & the Company was on outpost duty same night.”

The next entry, for the 10th July, is unclear, but he mentions not looking after something properly, adding “but got away with it”. On the same day he mentions writing a letter home to his wife Susan.

Back in Bicester, on the 1st June, The Herald informed its readers that although no official confirmation had been received of the surrender of Pretoria, it was certain that Johannesburg had been taken and that the British flag was flying over government buildings. Unlike the Relief of Mafeking, the surrender of Pretoria “created no excitement, though plenty of interest, in Bicester on Tuesday, and flags were quickly exhibited in the streets, and streamers in some cases were flown across the thoroughfares.” It added on the 8th June that “There is practically no news of military movements from South Africa this morning.” On 22nd it reported that two men from Bicester were suffering from enteric fever: Stephen Henry Swell of the Scots Greys and William Payne of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry whilst reassuring its readers that they were progressing satisfactorily in their recovery, adding that

there were nearly forty Bicester men serving with the forces in South Africa. Sadly, the issue of the 29th June reported that a third man, Arthur Butler of the 1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry had the misfortune to have a mild attack of enteric fever.

The Bicester Herald of the 6th July had the following paragraph; “Private Arthur East, of the Pitts, Bicester, expresses his appreciation of the papers and letters from Bicester. At the time of writing (June 1) he was lying at the foot of Majuba Hill, and he cannot help mentioning the disaster of 1881. He has had several chats with Private Waine, of Launton, and saw Private Butler, of the same village, when he went into hospital. He thinks Bicester is getting quite military, with its boys’ brigade. He believes the war will soon be over, and he will be glad of it, because “it’s not all sunshine.”” – in that last sentence perhaps echoing what Lewis Turney had written about winter in South Africa.

The Bicester Advertiser of the 13th July gave the following numerical breakdown of the casualties suffered by the South African Field Force up to the 7th July:

	Officers	Men	Total
Killed	255	2,411	2,666
Died of wounds	7	625	695
Wounded (living)	836	10,740	11,576
Missing and prisoners	59	1,927	1,986
Died in captivity	1	84	85
Died of disease	137	4,398	4,535
Accidental deaths		68	68
	1,358	20,253	21,611

As mentioned in the second instalment of this series, enteric fever, or typhoid, was endemic in South Africa at the time and may have been a contributing factor to the figure for deaths through disease being higher than those killed in combat. The Advertiser adds that 916 officers and 19,742 men had been sent home as invalids. The following week The Advertiser reports that the enteric fever question had been raised in the House of Commons where George Bartley, MP for Islington North, asked the Under Secretary for War, George Wyndham, if his attention had been called to a report from Dr Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the Langman Hospital in Bloemfontein in which he stated that there had been no deaths from enteric fever up to the 5th June among those inoculated, and whether any efforts were being made to increase this number among those leaving for South Africa and China – this was also the time of the Boxer Rebellion, which, by this time, was occupying as many column inches as matters in the Cape. In the three weeks ending 1st June there had been 1,180 admissions and 391 deaths due to enteric fever. And yes, there was a Bicester link to the troubles in China. The Bicester Herald of 27th July reported that Private Jones, a gunner with the Garrison Artillery, and residing on the

Launton Road, had, the day before, sailed for the Far East and Cathay. He was not 'alone', the Herald of the 17th August informed its readers that a Bicester sailor, Thomas Hudson, had arrived in China on the pre-dreadnought battleship, H.M.S. Goliath.

Two of those invalided home were Bicester men, as the Advertiser of the 24th August reported: Private Harry Leach of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry who had arrived home the previous week, and Private Stephen Henry Swell, the landlord of the Rose and Crown, who had been serving with the Scots Greys. He had arrived back in England the previous Saturday and quite a number of people went to Bicester railway station with the hope of giving him a good welcome home reception. They were to be disappointed. He was first ordered to Edinburgh, the headquarters of his regiment, and subsequently to Gosport. This report is somewhat contradicted by one appearing on the 31st August describing his eventual arrival in Bicester, where; "He immediately became the centre of much interest, and received many congratulations from his numerous friends on having returned safe and well. Mr Swell has several interesting trophies of his experiences in South Africa. He is now on furlough." The Herald of the 31st August adds the details that he had been a reservist in the Scots Greys and he was called up at the commencement of the war. Possibly falling victim to the South African winter, on the 27th May rheumatism forced him to go into hospital. On the 1st August he left Cape Town on board the Canada, arriving at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport on the 18th August. Another local man returned from the Cape due to injury at this time was Frederick Reeves, who had hurt his ankle at Paardeberg, and was in the Woolwich Hospital, as the Herald of the 17th August reported.

Whilst various local "Soldiers of the Queen" were returning home, Lewis Turney's tour of duty in South Africa continued. Mention has already been made of the problems that disease caused in the ranks of the South African Field Force. On the 19th July 1900 Lewis Turney became yet another part of those statistics. He records that after a spell of outpost duty he had to go sick and see the doctor with a slight fever. After having his temperature taken, he was prescribed medication, and a tin of Bovril, and to lie down. Later entries have him being assigned light duties, his unit being relieved by the Scottish Rifles on the 24th. On the 25th he is still recorded as receiving medication, but he also receives two letters from home to sweeten the bitter pills that he had to swallow. The following day, his unit "received sharp orders" to pack up and leave Greylingstad and to move in a north-west direction to Heidelberg, some 28 miles as the crow flies, which he reached at 3.30 p.m. on the 28th. Along the way he further comments on the South African winter noting the dark, cold and fog, a situation not helped by an enforced wait of 1½ hours at one of the overnight halts for the tents and blankets to catch up – and Lewis still recovering from whatever illness had befallen him. He describes Heidelberg as a nice but also important town on the "railway line clear all through from Durban to Pretoria". He records reporting to Major Longdon of the Army Service Corps and with a Corporal and 18 men mounting guard at Heidelberg Railway Station to look after supplies and stores. On Tuesday, 31st July 1900, Lewis Turney and his company again paraded at 10.30 a.m. for outpost duty.

The following day, Wednesday, 1st August, he records that... [To be continued.]

- Mark Lewandowski



Bicester Post Office Staff, circa 1914. Lewis Turney - middle row, just left of centre with the straw boater.

Talks Update

Unless the situation changes again, these talks will all be held at the Clifton Centre, with appropriate safety measures in place. Recorded versions will then be available to view on our website afterwards.

The recordings of our April and June talks are available on the website now.

Monday 18th July

Anni Byard covers her career to date as an archaeologist and ancient metalwork specialist in her talk **Archaeology, Artefacts and a Career in Ruins**.

Monday 19th September

This will be our **2022 AGM**, followed by the official release of our **2023 Calendar**.

Monday 17th October

Bill King considers why the River Thames was such an important strategic feature in World War II in his talk, **The River at War**.

Bygone Bicester (Taken from the Bicester Advertiser)

2nd June 1882

THE CRICKET MATCH

On Monday last the annual Whit Monday match was played on the Bicester Cricket Ground. As it was Bank Holiday, all places of business were closed, and the weather being all that could be desired, large numbers of the lovers of cricket flocked down to the field, which looked quite gay with the number of tents and the display of bunting. Praise is due to Massey for having prepared so good a wicket for the occasion.

At 11:30 proceedings commenced by Mr E.H. Paxton choosing the eleven, or rather twelve. Mr H Tubb undertook to captain the twenty-two, and as the number increased to thirty-four, his post was no sinecure in placing in the field such an extraordinary number.

The twelve took the field, and the big number was represented by Long and Webb, against the bowling of C. Shillingford and Hobbs. It is needless to give a detailed account of the innings, suffice it to say that none of the side were able to stand long against such bowling and good fielding. When the bell rang for luncheon there were 21 wickets lowered for 54 runs. All adjourned to the large marquee and partook of a good lunch, kindly given by G. Tubb, Esq., and placed on the table in Phillips' usual good style.

On the conclusion of the repast Mr E.H. Paxton rose, and in felicitous terms proposed the health of Mr George Tubb, Mrs Tubb, and Mr and Mrs Henry Tubb, which was cordially drunk, with three times three and musical honours. Mr H Tubb briefly responded.

On resuming the game, the wickets fell even more rapidly than before, Paxton bowling in Shillingford's place, in his "high, home, and easy" style, inducing the unwary to hit out, only to be caught, or if they missed to be bowled or stumped. Lindsey's bowling at the other

end was equally disastrous, and the innings closed for 78 runs.

For the side of the dozen, Lindsey and S. Coleman were the first at the wickets. Wakenell commenced the trundling at the bottom end, and Clarke donned the gloves. The second ball produced a single at mid on by the first-named batsman, and another was placed to the leg, whilst another was fuddled by Blake, and one over had been sent down. Greenfield (slow round) took the leather at the top end. In the third over Lindsey hit Wakenell prettily to the leg for 2, and shortly after Blake retrieved his laurels by catching Coleman in the mid's. The telegraph denoted 7-1-1.

Hill followed, and after his partner had scored a single, hit to the leg for a couple, the fielding being anything but faultless. Shortly after the townsman drove for two, and the following ball found his wickets spread-eagled by Wakenell. Paxton appeared, and cut the second ball for unit and drove another over the bowler's head for a brace, and also to the off for the same number. A run was stolen which might have cost a wicket but the ball was slippery.

Greenfield, who had been bowling round and under, sent another down which Paxton failed to land properly, and was caught by the captain for a score of nine. 24-3-9. Hobbs filled the vacancy, and shortly after skied one, giving a chance to Goble, but the sun was powerful, and he failed to see it. Singles were made, and the left hand man in trying to shoot one through the many fieldsmen, was secured by Handy at leg.

Cort was the next batsman, and the sparring became tame. In a short time, however, Hill was caught and bowled by Greenfield. The catch was a smart one – higher up and one hand. 37-5-8. Grimsley came and hit hard to the off for three, and Cort, putting one to square leg, was well caught by Everton, after running for it.

C. Shillingford filled the opening, and his partner was badly missed by George, and almost directly after was bowled by Wakenell. 47-7-5. Holiday came in, and Shillingford hit to square leg, the ball being well returned by Egerton. Holiday made singles and his partner hit to the tent for 3, when the first-named batsman was secured by Wakenell.

Up to this time the wickets had been equally divided between the two bowlers. The brothers Shillingford now became partners, and the fresh batsman drove to the off for one. At this juncture the captain of the field took the ball, vice Greenfield. The game became more lively, and both players were running up the score, and it was palpable they were the salvation of the side. C. Shillingford played a good cricket innings of 28 (not out), whilst his brother put together 17 in fine form, amongst which was one to the tent for four. After both had settled down to their work, and at 80 up W. Shillingford was splendidly caught at square leg by Egerton.

Palmer in beginning to bat hit one up in the mids, but Sloan was too "eager for the fray" and dropped it, but the sticks soon fell to Wakenell. Telfer was the Omega, and was disposed of for a "lovely duck." The innings finished at 93, leaving the twelve winners on the first innings by 13 runs. The wickets were drawn at seven, but the second innings of the thirty-four has hardly any reference to the game.

29th June 1917

BICESTER URBAN DISTRICT TRIBUNAL

A meeting of the above tribunal was held at the Magistrate's Chamber on Wednesday evening last, the following being present: Messrs W. Malins (chairman), W. George, H. Giles, J. Harris, T.T.S. Buckle, W.J. French, the acting Clerk (Mr F. Hudson), and the Military Representative (Captain H.G. Fane).

SURGICAL BOOTMAKER TO STAY

Charles Ernest Scivyer, 36, married, carrying on business as a surgical bootmaker at 46 Market Square, Bicester, asked for conditional exemption. Mr Murphy appeared for the applicant and stated that his client's principal work consisted of surgical bootmaking, and that he made these boots for the Oxford branch of the Royal Surgical Aid Society which comprised the whole of Oxfordshire and parts of Berks and Bucks. During the past year he had dealt with about 60 cases for this Society, and in addition had dealt with about 30 private cases. He worked for seven surgeons, making boots for patients after they had recovered from operations. To make these boots it was necessary to take detailed measurements, and he made up the whole of the cork and leather completely himself, as it is impossible to get parts ready-made. Such work as this required special training and experience and he was doubtful if there

was another man in the county who could do the same class of work. If the applicant had to go the cripples in the district would therefore be unable to get proper boots.

Mr Scivyer, in addition to being a surgical bootmaker, was also a bespoke bootmaker and repairer. All his capital was invested in his business, and if he had to go into the army he knew of no one who could carry on in his absence. He (Mr Murphy) asked the tribunal to take into consideration that Mr Scivyer was a married man and had four young children. One child was continuously ill, and was under the doctor at the present time. Mr Scivyer's class of work was quite a specialty. He had no assistance, but made all the boots himself. Since last before the tribunal there had been a slight increase in his business. He had passed for category C1, and was in the list of certified occupations. A letter in support of the application was read from Mrs Rutherford Smith, Secretary to the Oxford branch of the Royal Surgical Aid Society.

The military representative remarked that Mr Scivyer had passed for category C1, and that class of a man was particularly asked for at present.

Mr Malins – Have you ever made any surgical boots for wounded soldiers?

Applicant – Yes, I returned a pair only today.

The tribunal, after a short consultation, granted four months conditional exception.

MILITARY APPLICATION

The military authorities asked for a review of the certificate of exemption held by George Walter Lewis, 37, married, of Market Square, Bicester. They considered it no longer necessary for the man to remain in civil occupation.

Mr Alfred Truman appeared for Mr Lewis, to oppose the application.

The military representative, in opening the case, said that Mr Lewis was granted conditional exception in March 1916. The military authorities, in view of the low category into which he had passed, did not object to exemption up to 3 months being given, but they could not consent to any longer period, as they did not wish to lose sight of any men, in case of emergencies.

Mr Truman said the tribunal would remember that the case has been adjourned from the last meeting in order that it might be laid before the insurance commissioners. He asked if, by accepting the terms of the military authorities, Mr Lewis would prejudice his chance of obtaining a further exception at the expiration of the proposed three months.

The chairman said he did not see that Mr Lewis would be at any disadvantage by so doing.

Mr Truman thereupon accepted the proposal of the military authorities, subject to the ascent of the tribunal. Three months conditional exemption was

granted.

GROCERS' MANAGER REFUSED EXEMPTION

The Oxford Co-operative and Industrial Society, asked for further exception for Edwin Hims, manager at their Bicester branch.

Mr Ramsay, one of the company's officials from Oxford, said that Hims was 40 years of age last birthday and was married. He was the only man left at the Bicester branch of the Co-operative Society, of which he was manager. He controlled a staff of five females and one lad, and it would be impossible to carry on without a capable man in charge.

Four of the original staff from the Bicester branch had already joined the colours, and altogether the company had released over 180 men. They had scarcely a fit man left in their employ. Mr Hims had duties which did not come within the ordinary scope of an ordinary grocers' manager.

He had work to do pertaining to shareholders' investments, and the company's savings bank. A female could not be expected to carry out the work. Mr Hims was not fit for the army. He suffered considerably from foot trouble.

Mr Malins - Could not a female take over the management?

Mr Ramsay - No, it would be impossible.

Mr Malins - In what way do you consider your business of national importance?

Mr Ramsay - We cater in food stuffs for a large public.

Mr George - Are any of your branches managed by females?

Mr Ramsay - None whatever.

Mr George - It is not impossible for a grocer's shop to be managed by females. A large establishment in the town today is being so managed.

Mr Ramsay - For a female to take charge of such a shop as ours, she would have to be specially trained. We employ numerous female assistants. Whereas we only had 41 in the year 1914, we have 135 now. All men are being released for the army where possible.

The tribunal, after a lengthy retirement, decided to refuse the application, but asked the military not to call the man up for one month, in order that the society might make other arrangements.

FISH-SALESMAN GETS SHORT EXEMPTION

Sydney Frederick Smith, fishmonger, Sheep Street, Bicester, sought exemption for George Henry Grace, 34, married, described as a fish-salesman.

Mr Alfred Truman, who represented Mr Smith, stated that Grace was employed five days in the week in delivering fish in the villages around Bicester. The remainder of his time was spent in cleaning his fish utensils, cart, harness, etc. He delivered in a very big radius. He suffered from paralysis and had only passed for category C3. The villages around Bicester would be

absolutely without fish if he had to go. He was a married man and had two children.

The Military Representative, to Mr Smith - How many employees did you have before the war?

Mr Smith - Eleven.

The Military Representative - And how many have you now?

Mr Smith - Six.

Mr Truman remarked that Grace cultivated about 3 3/4 chains of land. His deformity was such that it was preferable for him to cycle whenever he could, even to and from his work.

Mr Buckle asked the military representative if the military were pressing for C3 men, the reply being that of course there was not the demand for them that there was for men in higher categories.

The tribunal retired and on their return the chairman said two months exception would be granted.

ECHO OF THE BUTCHERS' "POOLING" SYSTEM

Joseph T. Stevens, butcher, Sheep Street, Bicester, applied for exemption for Arthur Grace, 32, married, a journeyman butcher and slaughterer.

Applicant said that Grace was the only slaughterer he had left, and asked for conditional exemption. He had passed for category C3, after having been twice rejected.

Mr Malins - Does he do all your slaughtering?

Applicant - Not quite all. I help him sometimes as he is not a strong man. He is the only man I have to leave in the shop when I go to market. I have one other man but his chief work is outside. I do a lot of business in the villages.

The tribunal granted two months exemption, conditional upon Grace cutting up meat for Mr W. Rose, who, if unsuccessful at Oxford in his appeal would shortly be joining the army.

Mr Stevens said he could not guarantee to cut up any meat on Saturdays. It would be impossible.

The chairman said he could probably arrange with Mrs Rose in order to save inconveniencing himself.

TO BE MEDICALLY EXAMINED

Robert Alfred Evans, 38, married, draper, outfitter, etc, asked for conditional exemption. He said he had already had to give up a certain amount of business owing to his man being called up. He had three shops, and the man was required as there was a considerable amount of heavy work, also some driving journeys. His turnover ran into thousands yearly, his rent and rates alone being over £100 per annum. He had only passed for category C1. If he was called up he would have to close down his businesses which would result in a serious financial loss. He had no-one who could manage in his absence. He had four young children, and his four brothers had joined the army voluntarily.

In replying to the Military Representative, Mr Evans said he passed for category C1 on September 7th last.

He had not since been re-examined. At an examination previous to September last he was totally rejected.

The Military Representative asked when Mr Evans filed a petition for further exemption, the reply being that he did so immediately he received his papers.

A member remarked that he ought to have done so before he received his calling up papers. Had the military have liked they could have fetched him as soon as his period of exemption had expired. A good deal of discussion arose on this point, Mr Evans pleading ignorance of the rules.

The tribunal ultimately decided to adjourn the case, Mr Evans being advised to get medically examined.

PRINTER EXEMPTED

Leonard Newby, "Herald" Office, Bicester, sought exemption for his son Leonard Newby, 23, single, described as a jobbing printer, etc. Applicant stated that the only staff in the printing office consisted of the man now applied for, one reporter compositor (aged 17 3/4 years), and three other boys, two of whom were totally inexperienced. The work consisted of setting up and printing a local newspaper, and general jobbing work.

The man applied for did jobbing, news, made up the paper, and was also a machinist and stone hand. On him devolved the brunt of the work, and his withdrawal would, without doubt, mean suspending the publication of a paper of over 60 years standing, as well as closing down a well established jobbing business extending over the same period. The man was twice previously rejected, and has now passed for category C3, although he was suffering from the same physical defect as when he was rejected. He could not do much manual labour if he had to go into the army.

Since the war three useful compositors had gone into the army, and the reporter had left. Thus four had left, as well as applicant's father who formerly had management of, and worked in, the printing office, but had to withdraw because of loss of eyesight.

Mr Malins – I suppose it would be difficult for you to obtain the service of a man over military age, to substitute your son.

Mr Newby – Yes, people in other towns are in the same plight as we are. I have made numerous enquiries but can find no one available.

A member of the tribunal called attention to the fact that Mr Newby's reporter would soon be called up.

The Military Representative asked Mr Newby the present circulation of the Bicester "Herald." Mr Newby declined to give the information verbally, but gave it in writing.

The Military Representative called attention to a new rule recently issued saying that consideration should only be given to provincial daily and weekly papers with large circulation.

Mr Buckle – Does the government curtail the supply

of your papers?

Mr Newby – No, I buy my paper by weight, not by number, and my paper has not been restricted.

The tribunal retired and after a considerable absence decided to grant three months conditional exemption.

13th June 1941

FRUIT PRESERVATION SCHEME

To the Editor of the Bicester Advertiser.

Sir, – As is no doubt generally known to your readers, it will not be possible in the present national emergency for any increase to be made in the domestic sugar ration this year for the purpose of jam making and fruit preservation. In order, however, to ensure that in spite of this the fruit crop in gardens, allotments, and private orchards, shall be utilised, the Ministry of food has sponsored a scheme for co-operative preservation of homegrown fruit. We are united in the recognition that we must husband our resources and guard unceasingly against waste. May I, therefore, have space in your columns to explain this scheme to the fruit growers of our Bicester homes?

The scheme for co-operative fruit preservation is being administered throughout the county by the Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes. The representatives, or, in the case of villages and towns where there are no Women's Institutes, delegates appointed by these representatives, have been entrusted with the task of forming, in each case, a centre to which all home growers may bring and sell their fruit. Any individual resident in the area covered by the centre has the right to contribute fruit, and anybody so doing is included as "a member of the centre," which term also includes those taking part in the work of the centre, or giving aid to it. These centres are recognised as licensed preservers for the preservation of fruit under the Ministry of Food Maximum Price Order for all fruits. In each case a centre committee is formed, and will estimate the sugar required for fruit preservation in the district and make application thereon to the County Secretary of Women's Institutes for a permit to be issued by the local food controller, to purchase sugar accordingly. The sugar used by the centres must, by Ministry of Food orders, be bought at the manufacturers price, i.e., 5 3/4 d. per pound, which, it should be noted, is higher than the price charged for the domestic ration.

The fruit brought to the centre for preservation by home growers will be weighed and put into a common fund for redistribution, and the growers will be paid for the fruit contributed, according to the rates laid down by the Ministry of Food Maximum Price Order for fruit. There is no restriction on the kind of fruit that may be preserved, provided that it is home grown, and not bought from shops, etc. Garden fruit, wild fruit, marrow, rhubarb, apples, pears, etc, may all be preserved,

though in the case of black currents, strawberries, and raspberries, it is laid down that only jam shall be made.

The members of the centre in charge of preservation have absolute discretion to accept or refuse fruit for preservation, and to decide how fruit can best be preserved. All jams and jellies made at the centre will be sold at wholesale prices to the local retailer, and the Ministry of Food have undertaken to buy any produce not so disposed of. Bottled fruits and preserves, other jams and jellies, are unrationed and may be sold to centre members at wholesale prices. Such sales must, of course, be made with due regard for "fair shares," and will be regulated at the discretion of the centre committee. The following are the prices on sales of soft fruits as laid down by the Ministry of Food: gooseberries 5d. per lb., strawberries 1s. 2d. per lb., raspberries 6 3/4d. per lb., black currents 11 1/2d. per lb., red and white currants uncontrolled, and loganberries 7d. per lb.

It will be appreciated by your readers that these preservation centres provide a market where home growers can dispose of what remains of their fruit crop after the requirements of immediate eating for their households have been satisfied. Some will perhaps have been able to save a little sugar for jam making at home, but in many cases there will be a surplus, and by selling to the centre, home growers will be making a very definite contribution towards easing the general situation of the depleted stocks and restricted supplies.

Besides these considerations, I think another important effect of the scheme will be to provide to home growers a relief from the anxiety that assails one when one is faced with unavoidable waste. That is now obviated, and I feel sure that the response to this opportunity for co-operation will be wholehearted.

I have been asked by the local representative of the Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes (Mrs W.E. Womersley) to be responsible for the formation of a centre here to cover the parishes of Bicester and Caversfield, and as chairman I have been fortunate enough to enlist the aid of the following committee: Mr T.E. Evans, hon. treasurer; Mr A. Whetton, hon. gardening expert and advisor; Mrs G. Goble, hon. supervisor of preservation; Mrs Morris, hon. secretary; Mrs O'Reilly or her deputy (representing the Mothers' Union); and Mrs Jones (representing Women's Section British Legion and Caversfield).

By the kind co-operation of the Oxfordshire County Council I have obtained permission for the Bicester Fruit Preservation Centre to have the use of the premises at Market End House. Many assistants will be required to help with the preparation of the fruit, etc, and offers of help will be most gratefully welcomed on application to the Hon. Secretary, Bicester Fruit Preservation Centre, Bicester House.

The committee of the Preservation Centre will be advised by their gardening expert as each crop comes into season, and the date for the collection of the fruit at Market End House will be advertised accordingly in every case.

Yours truly,

Margaret R. Coker,

Chairman British Legion, Women's Section.

Bicester House, 11th June 1941.

23rd June 1989

SPORTS CENTRE HOLD UP

Cherwell District Council officers will have to go away and think again about their plans to develop Bicester sports centre. The council has decided to defer consideration of a proposed major extension to the centre in the light of Oxfordshire County Council's decision not to contribute towards it.

The proposed extension would have added a teaching pool, a flume and pool, extra changing space, a fitness room, more storage, plus a lift for disabled people. Now Cherwell officers are to come up with alternative proposals which would be phased in over a period.

Bicester sports centre management committee members on Tuesday agreed that the revised proposals should be presented to their next meeting along with the capital estimates.

Cherwell is looking at the possibility of buying the centre from the county council, which would enable new development to take place in the near future. A report is being prepared by officers for the recreation and amenities committee meeting.

But last week the county's education committee decided to make a recommendation to the full county council meeting next month not to sell the centre to Cherwell.

District councillor Barry Wood told the management committee that the need for capital to be expended on the centre was greater now than when they started on the exercise two years ago.

"I would hope that the county council will be able to see its way clear to sell the centre to the district council so that we can try and find ways to try and make the centre into the recreational facility it needs to be," said Mr Wood.

The county council owns the freehold of the sports centre site, but the building is owned jointly by both councils. Cherwell now wants to buy the site and the county's half of the building.

Management committee members have been told of the effects of not going ahead with the extension. In particular, there is a need for better changing rooms and for ventilated and improved storage.

ART & HISTORY FESTIVAL



Saturday 16th July 10am-6pm

FREE Family fun day, vintage displays & stands

Our new location for the festival: Elms Farm,
alongside the A4421 in Newton Purcell, MK18 4AY

www.shelswellhistoryfestival.org.uk



ARTISTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

An exhibition featuring local artists celebrating
the British countryside

artinthecountryside.co.uk

Saturday 16th July 10am-6pm

Sunday 17th July 10am-4pm

Summer Walks

The first of Pat Snelson's guided walks around Bicester's buildings took place earlier this month and proved to be just as successful as we expected. All seven of the participants enjoyed themselves and many felt that it opened their eyes to how much there is to see in Bicester's buildings.

It did overrun a little from the 90 minutes advertised, but no one minded as it was all so interesting.

With a good number of people now signed up for the July and August walks we are sure that they will prove just as successful.

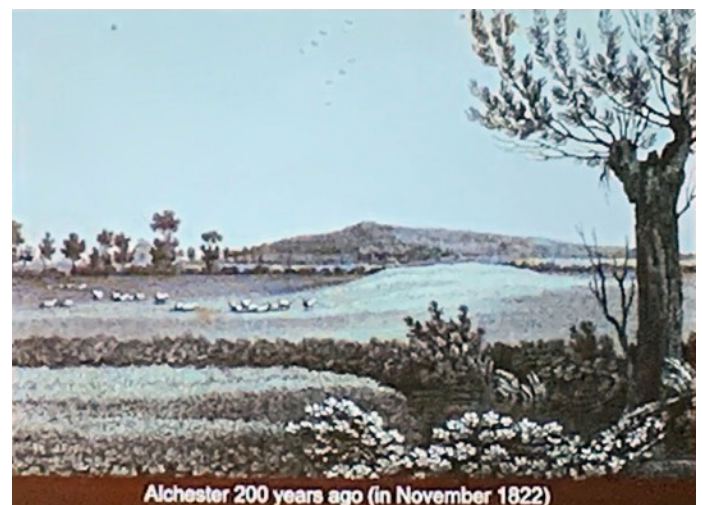


Alchester Talk

On Monday 16th May we welcomed visitors from Wendlebury and Chesterton for Professor Eberhard Sauer's long-awaited presentation on the excavations at Alchester. These took place between 1996 and 2004.

Alchester was once the largest town in Roman Oxfordshire and, for a very brief period shortly after the invasion, it was one of the major military bases in Britain. Its location on an important Roman crossroads was significant for its development as a base, which evolved into a town. Whilst Akeman Street is, in all probability, Iron Age, the main east-west road through Alchester was marked out by Roman surveyors and is precisely aligned with Graven Hill and Tackley Ford.

The foremost installation, in around AD43, was the Roman fortress, evidenced in part by a military granary which was very typical of the Roman army's sites. Shortly afterwards a 4-hectare annexe was added to the 10-hectare fortress. Oak gateposts were recovered in



2000, which were thought to have survived because of the high water table in the area. These were dated to Autumn AD44 or Spring AD45, making them the earliest dated timbers from anywhere in Roman Britain.

Eberhard discussed the possible construction of these gates and the evidence for other defences.

Inside the fortress, drainage ditches were excavated together with timber-lined water supply ditches, suggesting that Alchester was one of the earliest sites in Britain to benefit from a flowing water system. It's thought that the water was taken from the Gaggles Brook to the south of Alchester (rather than the west), by means of a water wheel. Comparisons can be made with another lowland fort at Oberstimm in Bavaria, which was also located adjacent to a natural water source.

Foundation trenches for timber-framed buildings were discovered. Extensive excavations to the west of the town revealed evidence of barracks. These typically consisted of double rooms which included a front room for storage and rear premises for cooking, housing eight men. The barracks at Alchester were very long, which may indicate that the occupants were legionary rather than auxiliary. Stored within the barracks would have been the segmental and scale armour worn by the soldiers.

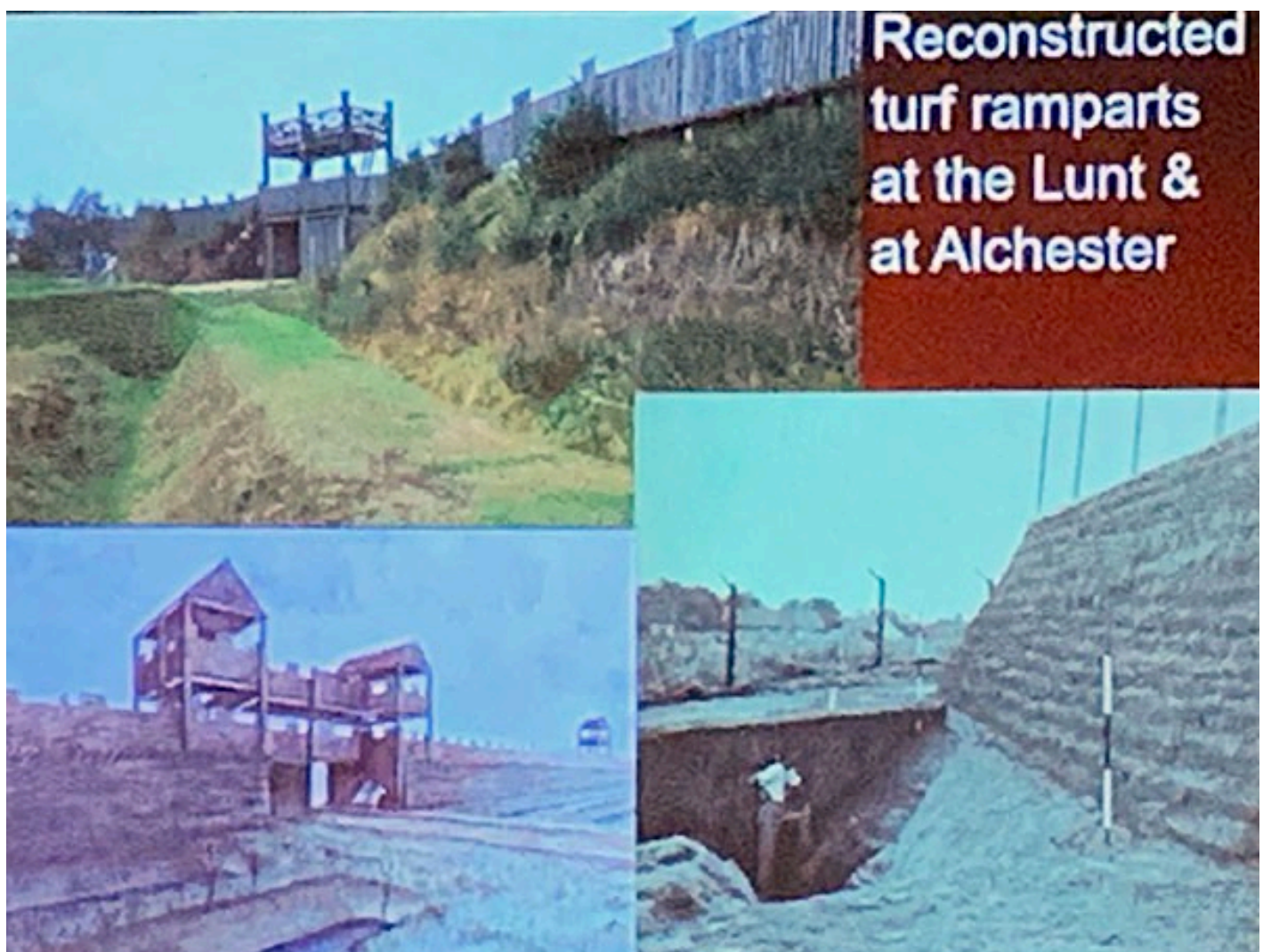
The Alchester garrison was heavily armed. An abundance of weaponry and equipment was found, including spear and javelin heads, horse armour and pendants, and parts of shields and helmets. Three-winged arrows were employed by the Roman army and

were effective anti-personnel weapons, particularly against enemies not equipped with armour.

A hoard of military medals was found in the ditch next to the annexe. It's suspected that they were placed there following a theft, because they had originally had a silver decoration which had been removed. Also found in the same area was a chamfron, which would have protected the head of a horse. This, also, would have had a silver decoration of which little survives.

Daily or twice daily training meant that the Roman army was superior to most of its enemies. Alchester is one of the few places where archaeological remains of a training ground exist. This consisted of a flat, gravel platform and, although this has been ploughed away, the high gravel content is still evident.

The aforementioned evidence should not be construed to suggest that the relationship between the invasion force and the native population was one of constant hostility. Sheep bones from small, Iron Age-style animals showed that they were sourced by the Roman army from local farms. Further interaction with the indigenous population was evidenced by a wine strainer made by a British craftsman, found in a drainage ditch at the fortress. Additionally, a range of Iron Age coins were located, attesting to trade with local communities.



There is one individual whose life is well-illustrated by discoveries from the Alchester site. In 2003, the fragmented remains of the tombstone of one of the inhabitants was found on the site. It carries the longest Latin text from ancient Oxfordshire and from it, we can reconstruct some of his life story. His name was Lucius Valerius Geminus and he was born in north west Italy. He evidently took part in the invasion of Britain and retired before the Alchester fortress was abandoned. Since he would have served at least twenty-five years with the Roman army, he must have joined at its previous base in Strasburg, since Alchester only functioned from AD43 to AD55-AD60. He fought around Frankfurt, the Isle of Wight and Colchester. He retired

age 50. Veterans commonly retired to an area close to their former base. Legio II Augusta, with whom Geminus fought, was commanded by Vespasian who later became emperor.

The army was withdrawn probably in the late AD50s and no later than AD60, but there was still much activity up to the late 4th century at least, as evidenced by the plethora of coins recovered from the site. Abandonment by the army was precipitated by the lack of a navigable river and the tendency for flooding. Alchester evolved into a town of a respectable size, manned by retired soldiers and their dependants, and camp followers providing services to them. They would have formed a large enough community to take over the former

fortress and transform it into a town. Town walls were constructed around AD290. It has been established that, with the exception of the bath house, military buildings would have been of timber construction, whereas the town was stone-built. Finds suggest that the town of Alchester was not completely abandoned until the 5th, 6th or 7th century.

- Sally James



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