

Bicester Local History Society Newsletter (October 2011)

Welcome to the Bicester Local History Society Newsletter. It is our aim that we publish a quarterly edition of the Newsletter to enable members without internet access to be kept informed of forthcoming meetings, events and projects that the Society will be undertaking. We would welcome any contributions that you might like to send to us.

Forthcoming Meetings:

We celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Bicester Local History Society in 2011. The talks we have selected for our monthly meetings reflect local themes in the Bicester Area. Talks take place at St Edburg's Church Hall, Old Place Yard, Bicester at 7.30 p.m. on the third Monday of the month. The programme for the fourth quarter of 2011 includes:



- 'Bicester Priory' – Bob Hessian (17th October)
- World War I & Bicester – Nigel Walton (21st November)
- 'Local Folklore' – Pam Chivers (19th December)

Bicester Local History Society gets into the Carnival Spirit:

Bicester Local History Society reflected a festive mood on Sunday 10th July when the restored Georgian Fire Pump took part in the Carnival Procession and demonstrated its fire fighting prowess at the Rugby Club field. The Pump was in full operation and fired the water jet for the first time. Fine weather drew large crowds. Many took the opportunity to visit the Society's History Display during the event. Thanks to all who helped to organise and man the displays at the Carnival.



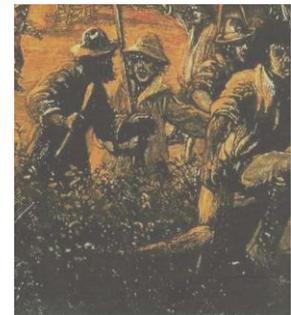
History Walks:

A series of Bicester town and local village walks have taken place since our previous Newsletter. Town walks included 'Bicester Odds & Sods' - Sunday 11th September. Village walks are open to BLHS members only and have included 'Fritwell' – Sunday 26th June, 'Kirtlington' – Sunday 17th July, 'Launton' – Sunday 14th August and 'Steeple Aston' – Sunday 18th September. Thank you to those who have led the walks and to the members of the Society who provided excellent refreshments at the various venues.



We are pleased to unveil a future Society initiative for members next month with the staging of a 'Countryside History Walk' for those who would like to take part in more ambitious historic themed rambles through the local

countryside. It is envisaged that the countryside walks will be approximately three to five miles long and provide an opportunity to explore local history off the beaten track. The first walk is planned to take place at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday 16th October. (Reserve date: Sunday 23rd October should the weather prove unsuitable on the original date.) This walk will supplement Pete Chivers 'Otmoor Riots' talk and take place at Charlton-on-Otmoor. Further details will be sent to members.



Oral History:

The Society has undertaken a programme of Oral History sessions over the past few years that have explored aspects of the area's history through the memories of those who were there at the time. Aspects of the town's history, local characters and events will form a backdrop to the production of an illustrative DVD and book in the near future. The time period studied covers the 1940s through to the 1980s and revisits a period before dramatic changes changed the town. We would welcome the chance to view any old photographs of the area that illustrate the town, people or events of the period we are studying. Please contact us if you can help. Many thanks.

A Museum/Heritage Centre for Bicester:

We are pleased to report significant progress with the campaign to establish a **Museum/Heritage Centre in Bicester**. (Thanks to members of the Society for completing and returning questionnaires outlining their views relating and to those members of the Society who organised and conducted the survey.) Consultations have since taken place between representatives of Bicester Local History Society, Oxfordshire Museum Service, Bicester Town Council and Cherwell District Council. Common ground was agreed during the discussions and further developments are awaited. Bob Hessian is compiling a '**Museum Resources**' list that highlights offers of materials made by the public for display at a possible Bicester Museum/Heritage Centre facility. Bob would be pleased to hear from anyone who would be willing to add to the list with offers of resources.

Bicester Priory Excavations:

Chapel Street in Bicester is undergoing a transformation with the construction of a development for the Sanctuary Housing Association. The demolition of Bryan House has presented archaeologists with a unique chance to re-examine the site of the former Bicester Priory that was founded in 1182 by Gilbert Bassett and demolished in 1536 by order of King Henry VIII. The photographs below illustrate some of the exciting finds that the dig has so far revealed!



An undated lead reliquary (above left) found in the North Transept. (Are these the remains of St Edburg?) The excavation of the site of Bicester Priory at the rear of Chapel Street (above right).



The grave site of three skeletons (above left) unearthed during excavations in July 2011. The remains of a stone plaque (above centre) left amongst rubble when the Priory was demolished in 1536. Members of the Society (above left) visiting the site on Saturday 20th August. Archaeologist Andrej Colovsky (bottom left) examines a skeleton found at the site. Bob Hessian, Paul Riccoboni (Senior Archaeologist) and David Watts (bottom centre) review the site. David Watts was involved in the original excavation of the Priory site in the late 1960s. Part of a medieval floor tile recovered during excavations at the site (bottom left).



Bicester Ghost & Foul Deeds Walks:

The popular 'Bicester Ghost & Foul Deeds Walks' are back by popular demand! The walks are scheduled to start at the Library, Old Place Yard at 7.30 p.m. on **Thursday 3rd November and Thursday 24th November**. The walks cost £3.00 per person. Further details are available from Pete Chivers (Tel: 01869 600109 or e-mail: peter.chivers@ntlworld.com).