

BICESTER LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER (APRIL 2012)

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: The talks selected for our meetings over the next few months reflect aspects of local history on a broad theme. 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 second quarter of 2012 includes:



'The Common Lodging House in Victorian England' – Liz Woolley (16th April)

'17th Century Thame' - Anthony Buxton (21st May)

'Health Matters in Bicester' – Pete Chivers (18th June)

A Museum/Heritage Centre for Bicester and the formation of a Bicester Museum Trust:

We are pleased to report progress with the campaign to establish a Museum/Heritage Centre in Bicester. Consultations have taken place between representatives of Bicester Local History Society, Oxfordshire Museum Service, Bicester Town Council and Cherwell District Council regarding this project over the past few months. Common ground has been agreed and further developments are awaited. We hope that a small Museum/Heritage facility will be included in the new Civic Centre. Other possible locations could become available in the coming months as government 'Localism Act' legislation is enacted to provide the opportunity for a more substantial Museum/Heritage Centre to be established.

Members of the Bicester Local History Society Committee, local councillors and volunteers have visited Thame Museum on a number of occasions recently to share the experiences that they gained in setting up a local town Museum. The Museum at Thame was set up as a Trust and is run by volunteers. Their model provides an excellent example of what might be achieved in Bicester. Further discussions will take place in the near future to determine the viability of a Trust project locally.



The Garth:

Recent speculation in the media has centred on the future of The Garth. The Town Council is currently considering the future of the iconic building. The roof at the house is in urgent need of repair to make it water tight. Options are under review to fund the repairs. The Garth has long been regarded in high regard by the town residents. Bicester Local History Society is monitoring developments concerning the refurbishment closely and the plans that are being discussed to develop the site. *Local Councillors are on record at Town Council meetings as suggesting that The Garth might well become a Museum in the future!*



History Walks:

A series of 'Village History Walks' are planned for this year. Walks take place on Sunday afternoons at 2.30 p.m. and are followed by refreshments. The walks will include *Lower Heyford* (10th June), *Brill* (8th July), *Chesterton* (19th August) and *Islip* (16th September). Further details will be made available to Society members when they are finalised.

Bicester Local History Society will be launching a new venture this year with a programme of 'Countryside History Walks'. These will enable those who wish to pursue their interest of the historic landscape to take their interest that little bit further! The walks are structured to complement the 'Village History Walks' and include countryside circuits around *Lower Heyford* (24th June – 3.5 miles), *Brill* (22nd July – 4.5 miles) and *Islip* (7th October – 5 miles). Further details will follow in the near future.



Community Archaeology Conference:

The Council for British Archaeology is to hold their Spring Conference at St Edburg's Church Hall, Bicester at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday 21st April. The Conference is title 'Community Archaeology' and finishes at 4.00 p.m. The event is open to the public and costs £12.00 for non-members of the organisation. Please contact Pete Chivers for further details if you are interested in attending.

Oral History – Can you please help?

The Society has undertaken a programme of *Oral History* sessions over the past few years. This has explored aspects of the area's history through the memories of those who were there at the time. Work is currently in progress to produce a DVD, to be released to coincide with the opening of the town centre redevelopment in 2013.

We are currently reviewing our photographic collection for images to include in the DVD. Have you any pictures that show events such as the Carnival, street parties, sporting occasions, areas of the town etc. that have taken place in the area? If anyone has pictures that they would be willing to share with us for this project we would be very grateful. Thank you for your kind help.

Many thanks to the members who replied to our plea to identify the group of mechanics in the mystery picture included in the last newsletter. We have been able to do this as a result of the response that we received. Many thanks for your help.



Skeleton and Pottery washing at Beckley:

John Moore Heritage Services provided the opportunity for members of the Society to experience hands on archaeological work assisting with bone and pottery washing activities at their Beckley headquarters. Sessions took place on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings. A number of our members took part in this activity. Work on the Dorchester-on-Thames bone and pottery washing has drawn to a close. Those taking part have moved on to archiving other local sites. If you are interested in taking part please contact Pete Chivers.



Visit to the Houses of Parliament:

A visit to *The Houses of Parliament* is being organised to take place on Tuesday 27th March 2012. This will be a unique opportunity to view parts of the building not usually accessible to the public. Bob Hessian has circulated details regarding the visit to those taking part. A report of the visit will be included in the next newsletter.

One off Events:



Bicester Local History Society is mindful that an increasing membership has created accommodation difficulties at our present venue location. One off events have been held at *The John Paul II Catholic Church Centre* in January and at *The Clifton Centre* in March to explore the possibility of moving to a larger centre for our Society activities. The Committee will consider possible options and consult with the membership as to a possible move to a new venue in the near future.



Jubilee Celebrations June 2012:

An eventful year which includes the long awaited start of the town centre redevelopment, the Olympic torch set to visit us and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee will all hopefully raise spirits in these rather depressing times. The Society will contribute to the Jubilee celebrations assisting with a traditional 'Anvil Firing' at The Garth. Bob Hessian has experimented with explosive combinations for this purpose and has assisted the Jubilee Committee develop a *Jubilee Historic Town Walk* to commemorate the event. Further details of the celebrations and these events will be appearing closer to the Jubilee event. Further details of Jubilee events are available on the Bicester Jubilee website at www.bicesterjubilee.co.uk



Volunteer's Meeting:

A number of projects worthy of development to enhance the work of the Society have been identified. Recently volunteers have been actively involved in refurbishing the town's *Georgian Fire Pump*, indexing books, reviewing research reports, developing village and countryside walks etc. Thank you to all those members who have undertaken these activities on our behalf. Volunteers met at The Littlebury Hotel on 22nd February to review current projects and to plan future initiatives. *If you feel that you would like to become actively involved in future projects please contact Pete Chivers.*

Bicester & World War I:

The Society experienced a talk by Nigel Walton concerning Bicester and the First World War last November. Nigel requested for anyone who could assist him in his research concerning the period. *'What I am hoping is that members of the BLHS will have access to documents, photos, letters and medals that will provide information on local men who served in the Great War. They may also have personal recollections and anecdotes of the men themselves which might help to flesh out the service of these men and their experiences in the Great War. I am happy to share with people any information I have collected through my research where it relates to any members of their families.'* If you are to help please contact Pete Chivers and I will pass on details to Nigel. Many thanks.

