



Issue: 5 November 2022

BLHS Newsletter

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

Bicester's Great War Talk

This month's talk, by Matthew Hathaway, follows on from his previous talk in 2019 and tells the stories of some of the local men who fought and died in the First World War in locations other than France and Belgium.

This takes place in the Clifton Centre on Monday 21st November and starts at 7:30pm.

Calendar Available

We still have copies of the calendar in stock so they will be available to purchase at the November talk and December social event. Anyone who can't come to the talks but would like to order a copy, please contact Sally James.

Regular price £8, members price £7.



St Edburg's Church Christmas Tree Festival

This year's festival takes place on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of December in St Edburg's Church. BLHS will be having a tree this year, decorated in the theme of Historic Bicester Maps.

Christmas Social Event

For our December meeting this year we have decided to hold another local history quiz night. But, unlike last year's one streamed online, this will be held in person at the Clifton Centre. Refreshments and the raffle will also be available.

2022 A.G.M - Monday 26th September

Bob Hessian opened the meeting, the first for two years because of the impact of Covid pandemic, and after apologies had been received from: Peter and Jean Crook, Patrick and Denise Moles, Gill Shillingford, Pat Snelson, Andy Taylor and Sue Wilde, he stood down as Chairman, as required by the BLHS Constitution, in order to conduct the rest of the AGM.

Bob began his report with a list of the Society's meetings during the preceding twelvemonth, both virtual and face to face:

October 2021 – Art as Historical Evidence – Jane Card (via Zoom)

November – Oxfordshire and the Spanish Civil War – Liz Woolley (live)

December – Social Event – we had planned a Christmas Social but due to the Covid situation at the time, elected to have a Zoom meeting – a quiz.

January 2022 – Diseases & Epidemics through the ages – Bob Hessian (via Zoom)

Dates For Your Diary

Bicester's Great War talk

21st November @ 7:30pm

Bicester Advertiser local history article

1st December

Christmas Tree Festival

2nd-4th December

December newsletter submission deadline

4th December

Christmas Social Event

19th December @ 7:30pm

February – What a Liberty – amusing incidents involving Oxford’s Mayors & Freemen over the last 500 years. (live)

March – Homes fit for Heroes – history of Council Housing in Oxfordshire – Sheila Alcock (live)

April – Bicester Reflections book described and explained by the author Matthew Hathaway – (live)

May – update of the archaeological work carried out c. 2000 at Alchester – Eberhard Sauer (live)

June – the Victoria Country History – how work is conceived and edited – Simon Townley (live)

July – talk by Anni Byard – cancelled because of excessive heat – to be rescheduled

and also, a number of walks in Bicester and Oxford: March 2022 – a guided walk in Oxford by Liz Woolley who centred on Lord Nuffield and Morris Cars, and three walks led by Pat Snelson - who pointed out the architectural highlights of some of Bicester’s buildings. The BLHS was also present at the Shelswell History event on the 16th of July, held on one of the hottest days of the year.

There was disappointing news regarding the Time Line intended for Bicester Library, which has been a ‘work in progress’ since 2018/19. Towards the end of last year, we were able to finalise it. The actual location had been chosen not just by us, but also, we had agreement and financial support from Cherwell and Oxfordshire County Council. The problem had arisen because Bicester Library had been included in an important project led by the British Library regarding business information and intellectual property. Bicester will be a ‘satellite’ hub to the County Library in Oxford. Because of this the three ‘local history’ computers were to be reassigned to the new project and the Chairman had been asked to contact the library to discuss alternative locations. After describing the news as a “bombshell”, Bob confirmed the timeline had been custom made to fit in that specific place in the library, and that it would not go anywhere else without some serious changes being made. The matter is ongoing.

The other timeline, that installed by one of the developers of Kingsmere is in the form of a series of tablets laid in the pavement in one of the play area parts of the development. It has been installed but had not been officially “opened”. Bob queried this and was told that there’d not been an official opening because of Covid.

Bob then proceeded to give an example of the sort of query regarding local history that he receives in the form of a lengthy exchange with a correspondent in Canada the minutiae of which need not detain us.

The Chairman next related a slightly awkward incident involving the Town Council, Garth Park and the Great War Memorial Bench installed therein by the BLHS. Observing that work was under way resurfacing the paths in the Garth, the Chairman had enquired if it might be possible to put a proper surface on the ground under the bench. “This morning I received an email from a member of staff who had been asked by the mayor and the Town Clerk and others – “Where is this memorial seat?” So Bob sent them a picture – “I think, quite rightly, they were embarrassed!!!”

Bob Hessian then proceeded to comment how good it was to have Matthew Hathaway restored to health, adding; “I’d like to thank you for all the work you’ve done, especially this last year in getting the Newsletter and now the multi-paged Bicester Historian up and running. And as you’ll find later this evening, he’s led the work on producing the BLHS 2023 calendar.” This produced a spontaneous round of applause. He continued; “I thank you for the continued support of our members and I hope we can continue having live meetings in the future and enjoy one another’s company. Not forgetting the help from members in setting up the hall, putting away chairs, serving teas and biscuits, providing prizes and selling raffle tickets, and all the other behind the scenes happenings that keep the society going. And my special thanks to the Committee who have persevered in helping to keep the Society active and providing interesting topics for our meetings. Thank you!” He then asked Sally James to give the Treasurer’s report, given verbatim below.

“You’ll recall that in the year from September 2020 we waived our subscription, as we were severely restricted in what we could offer to members. This last year we’ve had talks via a mixture of Zoom and face-to-face meetings. But we’re aware that not everyone wants to get to grips with Zoom and some members have still needed to be cautious about meeting in person. So, we’ve had half-price subs this last year. We’re happy to have more or less broken even this year, because we feel that it means that we got the subs about right, given that there’s ongoing costs regardless of the activities we’re able to provide. That’s a brief overview, but to highlight a few items: We attracted twelve visitors to Eberhard Sauer’s talk on Alchester, so that increased our income from admission fees at a time when, generally (and understandably), attendance from members and visitors has been lower than usual.”

“Bob has generously donated his fees from talks to local groups to us and the ‘donations’ figure includes a sum from a chap from whom Bob collected a swarm of bees and who was happy to support us as a thank you for that, at Bob’s suggestion. So, thanks to Bob for that.”

“We switched our bank account from HSBC to Lloyds during the year because HSBC started to charge for writing and depositing cheques and cash. A lot of our members prefer to pay by cheque or cash - we’ve introduced the option to use a bank transfer this year – so charges would have been significant. The £50 compensation from

Lloyds stems from the fact that they initially declined our application to open an account, but subsequently agreed that they'd made a mistake and gave us £50 by way of an apology."

"Book sales – we've been delighted with the success of Matthew's new book and have happily purchased some from the publishers for sale to members at a discounted price. We've still got some for sale, so haven't quite covered our outlay, but they're going like hot cakes, so get yours now! Only £10! We've also sold a number of Bicester Through Time."

"The subscription to Jacqui Lawson cards might seem a little unusual, but has been a real godsend at a time when it wasn't necessarily wise to be out and about looking for Xmas cards and, of course, postage has become particularly pricey."

"We're planning a full programme of activities for this coming year, so we have in mind to return to a full subscription, which we're proposing to hold at the level first charged in 2019. That's £20 for joint membership and £13 for individuals. That has to be ratified at this meeting, so could we have a show of hands for that please?" This was approved unanimously. Sally James also provided the meeting with a detailed analysis of the BLHS finances for the past year, income and expenditure, the minutiae of which, again, need not detain us. Suffice it to say that at the end of the 2021/22 BLHS year the Society had £5,845.35 in the coffers, an increase of £17.97 on the previous year. This was a commendable result given the restrictions imposed on the Society by the Covid pandemic.

At this point, in accordance with the rules of the Society, the Committee stood down, and Bob Hessian, asked the members for their agreement that he could take on the role of Acting Chairman whilst voting for the new Committee members takes place. This was passed unanimously.

A list of the recently stood down Committee was then displayed with the news that apart from one member, Sally Dexter, all those named were prepared to serve for the coming year, 2022/23. This was also passed unanimously, the new Committee, together with their areas of responsibility being:

Bob Hessian, Chairman

Sally James, Treasurer

John Roberts, Membership Officer

Matthew Hathaway, Newsletter Editor

Peter Crook

Mark Lewandowski.

Bob then added that; "One of the first tasks of the new Committee will be to see if we need new Committee members. If any of you think you'd be interested, then please let Sally James or myself know." There were no immediate volunteers.

The final item of business before the short refreshment break involved the retiring Sally Dexter. Bob paid tribute to her and her work in the following words: "Sally may have decided to come off the Committee, but she will still be a member of the Society and I'm pleased that she will be staying with us. She writes very accurate minutes, and she has been a great help to me as Chairman in getting me to follow up decisions, actions, etc., in a timely manner – and I thank you for that. And I'd especially like to thank you for the positive and constructive comments and contributions you have brought to our committee meetings and to the society as a whole. She always has a pleasant smile for members and visitors to our meetings. So, on behalf of the Committee and the members – thank you." She was presented with a card and flowers from the Committee as a small token of appreciation.

Committee & Contacts

Editor:

Matthew Hathaway
editor@blhs.org.uk

Website:

www.blhs.org.uk

Committee Members:

Bob Hessian (*Chairman*)
chairman@blhs.org.uk
01869 350662

Sally James (*Treasurer*)
01869 243804

Mark Lewandowski (*Minutes Secretary*)

John Roberts (*Membership Officer*)

Matthew Hathaway

Peter Crook

Meetings Address:

The Clifton Centre
Ashdene Road
Bicester
OX26 2BH

Postal Address:

BLHS c/o Sally James
14 George Street
Bicester
OX26 2EG