



Issue: 8 February 2023

# BLHS Newsletter

The monthly newsletter for Bicester Local History Society

## Special Request for Help

When the Roman coin hoard leaves the library in March we want to stage a display that represents how Bicester has commemorated/celebrated coronations over the years. We're looking for photographs of events held in Bicester, whether family or public orientated, relating to any of the coronations. Also, any artefacts or ephemera relating to previous coronations. I'm sure many of you will remember the last coronation in 1953 when school children either got a "Coronation Spoon", a "Coronation Medal" or a "Coronation Thingummybob"!

I've attached a picture of the inside cover of a book presented to pupils at Bicester National School. Entitled "King Edward's Realm", it tells how Britain became "Great" and had an Empire. How things have changed!

My memory of the 1953? In the months leading up to the event, my sister and I compiled our own scrap book of Coronation memorabilia – I still have mine. I remember the Smith's Crisp packets (greaseproof paper with a little blue bag of salt inside) had Union Jacks and crowns printed on them. Newspapers and magazines were full of stories of Princess Elizabeth and the rest of the Royal Family, along with lists of people who would be involved on the big day. I think that in the street where I lived (in Rugby) there was only one household that had a television and the whole neighbourhood crammed themselves into someone's sitting room to watch the proceedings on a TV with a 12" screen (the TV was encased in a polished cabinet with doors). We children had to sit on the floor whilst the adults sat on anything that could be sat on, as long as they didn't block anybody else's view! Us children probably had the best view as we were nearest the minuscule screen.

After watching the Coronation on the TV, it was down to the local community centre for a street party. This included local people participating in singing, telling jokes, knobbly knees contest, monologues – I think my father recited the Albert and the Lion story from memory (made famous by Stanley Holloway). The highlight of the party was when a small boy, with dark hair, slightly protruding front teeth, and wearing National Health spectacles, short trousers, socks and sandals, sang "Wonderful, Wonderful, Copenhagen" (a recent No. 1 for Danny Kaye in 1953). I was seven years old, and this was the first time I'd "performed in public"! For the next item I was joined by my friend next door, also called Robert, and we sang "How much is that doggie in the window (wuff, wuff), the one with the waggly tail (also a recent No. 1 hit parade record for Lita Roza). I think the audience joined in on the "woof, woof" bits! And we went to bed very late that night. Happy memories – so please tell us about yours!

*Bob Hessian*



## Dates For Your Diary

From Doilies to 007 talk

*20th February @ 7:30pm*

Bicester Advertiser local history article

*2nd March*

March newsletter submission deadline

*5th March*

Their Finest Hour event

*10th March*

Can Onions Cure Earache? talk

*20th March @ 7:30pm*



---

## From Doilies to 007 Talk

Committee member and newsletter editor, Matthew Hathaway, takes us through the histories of Bicester's Market End and King's End manors. Elaborating on some of the information presented in his upcoming book, *Bicester: A Potted History*, to tell us what happened to the priory's lands after they were seized by the crown, how the Turners became Page-Turners, what a bailiwick is and how it affected what we have today.

This will be in the Clifton Centre on Monday 20th February at 7:30pm.

---

## Their Finest Hour

Their Finest Hour is a University of Oxford-based digital history project that aims to collect and digitally preserve the stories and objects of the Second World War.

There is an upcoming event that they are organising at Oxfordshire County Library between 11am-3pm on Friday 10th March. The event is a volunteer-run 'Digital Collection Day', where members of the public can bring WW2-related stories and objects - which have likely been passed down to them by their relatives - to be recorded, digitised, and preserved in their free-to-use online archive for the benefit of future generations.

We have been asked if we could spread the word about the event and their project, and, of course, attend the event yourself if you are available. They are organising and supporting dozens of events across the UK in the coming months, details of which will be added to their events page:

<https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/event/oxfordshire-county-library>

Attendance at the event is free but they ask that people register their place in advance using the form on the event page .

---

## Can Onions Cure Earache? Talk

Melanie King presents an amusing but serious talk on how people tried to keep healthy and cure themselves during the eighteenth century. It will help us to appreciate modern health care systems based on germ theory, antibiotics and the use of anaesthetic.

This will be in the Clifton Centre on Monday 20th March at 7:30pm.

---

## BALH Publications for Loan

BLHS is a member of the British Association for Local History. Among BALH's many publications are the quarterly *Local History News* and *The Local Historian*. The former includes information about initiatives by local history groups across the country, illustrating best practice and the diversity of local history. There's always something to inform and inspire. *The Local Historian* contains material written by a wide variety of people, both amateur and academic, on an extensive range of history topics.

We have a collection of back copies available for loan. Come to our monthly meetings and have a browse.



---

## Committee & Contacts

### Editor:

Matthew Hathaway  
[editor@blhs.org.uk](mailto:editor@blhs.org.uk)

### Committee Members:

Bob Hessian (*Chairman*)  
[chairman@blhs.org.uk](mailto: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

### Website:

[www.blhs.org.uk](http://www.blhs.org.uk)