

# THE EYNSHAM RECORD



Number 19 – 2002

## NOTES

1. Images have been optimised throughout for online viewing.
2. Typographic errors in the printed edition, where identified, have been corrected in this digitised version.
3. Errors of fact or interpretation in the original which have since come to light are repeated but followed by an amendment in curly brackets {thus}
4. The pages are not available for printing “as is”, though you may copy/paste sections into another document.
5. Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in **print** for £1 plus p&p.
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### FRONT COVER

John Golby's article (pp.8-11) deals with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in Eynsham in 1887. This year the nation celebrates Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee. The front cover recalls her Silver Jubilee in Eynsham in 1977.

It needs some explanation! The plaque about to be fixed to the Market House reads: "This building was bought for the people of Eynsham with money raised to mark the Silver Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in June 1977". It was carved by the sculptor Bill Brown (on the scaffold). The boy is holding an item to be placed in a time capsule behind the plaque. Don Chapman (right) and David Wastie were respectively the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Jubilee committee.

Photograph by Sue Chapman.

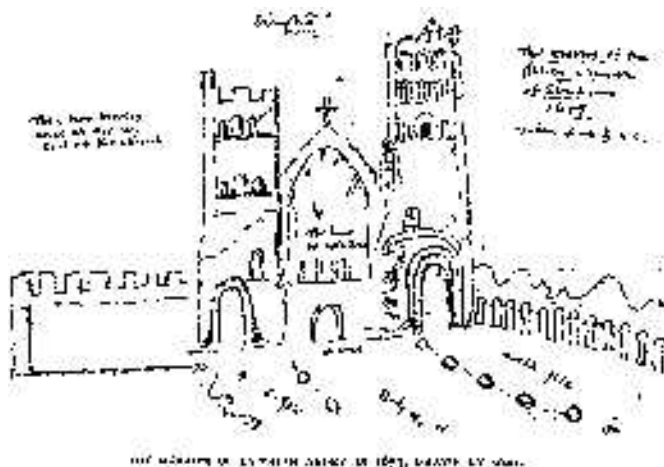
Another reminder of the 1977 events appears on pp.12-13

Note on abbreviations: see page 19

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## CONTENTS

Editorial .....	1
Beryl Hastings (1934-2001) by Josie Smith .....	2
William Bainbridge, his life & times (1907 -2001) by Joan Weedon .....	3
F.W.Wastie, apple breeder: <i>errata</i> .....	7
Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Eynsham in 1887 by John Golby .....	8
A reminder of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977 .....	12
Eynsham's new Village Hall .....by Fred Wright .....	14
THEN & NOW .....	18/19
Charles Philcox, chicken breeder .....	20
Belgian Refugees in Oxford & Eynsham .. by Pamela Richards ..	21
Tolkien, father & son .....	29
The Clock Restored ..... by Clive Brimson .....	30
Oscar Mellor, Printer & Artist ..... by Don Chapman .....	34
End of an Era: Meals on Wheels .....by Pat Atkins .....	36

## EDITORIAL

We start by congratulating two individuals on their achievements.

First, Robin Saunders, Proprietor of the Evenlode DIY Store, who was awarded an MBE for his services to the village in the New Year's Honours List. Robin's contributions to village life include tree planting and Morris dancing. His charitable work in eastern Europe has been described by Joan Weedon in the *Roundabout* (no.131, Feb. 2002). He is also a school governor, and for many of us he is an ever cheerful supplier and adviser on DIY matters. In these pages I wish to point out that ever since the inception of the journal in 1984, Robin and his staff have sold for us by far the greatest number of copies.

Second, Martin Harris, our Chairman. Martin has recently won the prize for contributing the most significant list of Oxford literary figures in a competition run by *The Oxford Times*, sponsors of the Oxford Literary Festival. Martin's list was used in the compilation of a splendid new map of the city.

Things, as always, are afoot in this lively community. Fred Wright tells the story of the new Village Hall (pp.14-17), and the Square will be given a new appearance this summer. One of the new features in the Square will be a plinth, bearing one of six plaques on a walk around the precinct of the former Abbey. The team planning and designing this "Heritage Trail" has included an archaeologist, museum curators, a graphic artist, and a planning expert. All the funding has been raised by the Eynsham History Group, via a Lottery Grant, grants from the OCC and the WODC, its own resources, and individual donations and sponsorship. More details on this project, the most adventurous the EHG has undertaken, in the next number.

Local and family historians will be pleased to learn that St Leonard's churchyard has been mapped at a large scale, and the monumental inscriptions recorded. The work is soon to be published by the Oxfordshire Family History Association.

Thanks to all contributors, including those who have sent 'snippets' or pictures.

Special thanks to Sue Chapman (front cover) and Martin Harris (p.18) for the loan of photographs; the Tolkien Trust and the Bodleian Library for the reproduction on p.29; and Anna Stone, the archivist for the insurers CGNU, who, sorting through some papers from the 1930s, sent us the substance of page 20.

## **BERYL HASTINGS (1934 - 2001)**

**by Josie Smith**

English local history is largely about people- the people who hold together the fabric of our towns and villages, build homes, raise families, hold down jobs, support local organisations, and are always first to lend a cheerful helping hand whenever anyone is in need. Beryl Hastings, who died after a short illness on the 27th November 2001, was just such a person. She was born and bred in Eynsham, and had family roots in the area.

She will be remembered with affection by friends from her Brownie and Sunday School days, the 'Wives Fellowship', and by members of the Eynsham History Group, where she was an excellent Social Secretary for many years. At the Bartholomew School where she was employed until her retirement, staff and pupils alike remember her with fondness. Last, but by no means least, she will be sadly missed by the Eynsham W.I. members, having been their Secretary until her untimely death. Beryl was an active member of the Witney Road Playing Fields Fund Raising Group while it existed, and for many years collected for the Red Cross. She used to say that she had to allow a long time to make her rounds - an indication again of her friendly personality.

It was a privilege to have Beryl as a friend and neighbour. Many have been blessed as a result of her unfailing helpfulness, kindness, and courtesy. She always gave more than was needed, and was recognised as a caring, warm, and smiling person who never appeared ruffled.

The parish church was filled to the doors for her funeral. The service brought together a whole generation of Eynsham people who knew and loved her. In a very tangible way, it also drew together all the many years of the village's history. Down the centuries, it has been people like Beryl who have been the bedrock of the strong, robust and supportive village community we have today. We shall miss her greatly.

Our sympathy goes out to her husband Jim, sons Nicholas, Duncan, Neil, Matthew and their families, plus, of course, her siblings Joan, Pat, Tony and Pauline.

# **THE LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE 1907-2001**

**by Joan Weedon**

For some twenty years a member of the Eynsham History Group, William Bainbridge moved to Eynsham, his maternal grandparents' home, in 1974. William's background had given him an early interest in family history: his two grandfathers had met in Paris in 1868 at an international exhibition where Grandfather Bainbridge exhibited Estate ironwork gates from his foundry, for which he received a bronze medal. A close friendship developed between the two men and the families later became related by two marriages, those of William's parents and also of his mother's sister with his father's brother.

Both younger families lived in Pau at the Hotel de Londres, owned by a Bainbridge great-aunt, Madame Hall. This lady was the first member of the family to have the Christian name 'Amor'; a curious institution which began when Madame Hall's pregnant mother was waylaid by a stranger, a lady who descended abruptly from a fine carriage and pair to request that the girl's first child should be named 'Amor', for which request a golden guinea was given. William's great-aunt became a successful, if formidable, lady who, when travelling, habitually lit a spirit stove to provide herself with hot drinks. To the end of his life, the memory of the occasion when his great-aunt set the railway carriage on fire, greatly amused William.

Born in Biarritz when his mother was on holiday, William had a childhood which he found extremely interesting. He and his young 'double-cousin' Amor, attended the nearby French school, a gloomy place, formerly a Jesuit monastery. Both children were occasionally entertained at the local castle where Baron de Voss and his family lived. There was a large colony of the British at Pau, English shops and a doctor, three English churches and a hunt, complete with foxhounds. Disappointingly for William, the airship which sometimes arrived in Pau was out of bounds, and he envied his uncle who achieved a flight in it.

In 1912 the family ran into trouble with the local townspeople when the Bainbridge bank in Pau failed, following the sudden departure of a partner, an Army Captain, with all the funds. Family members were spat upon in the streets and life was most unpleasant. Then William's uncle who had inaugurated the bank, died when he fell from a train on the way to Brest.

This dark period was followed by the outbreak of war, and in 1917 the family decided to sell the hotel and return to England. William and his parents had

visited England earlier in the war and on their return journey William had been invited by the captain onto the bridge as the craft moved out of Liverpool harbour. William was intrigued to be asked to 'keep an eye open' for submarines. Later he was shocked to hear that the captain and his ship were torpedoed and lost on their return journey. A final visit to Pau was made in 1919 to retrieve the hotel furnishings and the family's belongings; the family was dismayed to find that only one of the many crates was intact, the remainder containing stones.

William's parents bought an hotel in Lancaster Gate, London, and bilingual William began his English studies at University College School, followed by a short course at the Central School of Design. His intensive studies of art, art history, architecture and archaeology began at that time; they were to become a consuming passion for the rest of his life.

Advertising agencies were beginning to flourish in 1925. William began his first job at a relative's agency and worked for two further agencies before he began to free-lance in 1931. Initially advertising films, he went on to design costume and sets for the theatre and film world. Grandfather Evans had founded a microscope-producing factory in London which, by 1939, undertook wartime contracts for periscope lenses. When the two working directors died, William was required to take over the running of the factory and some of the hand-carving of the products.

Early in the war the Lancaster Gate hotel was bombed. William and his parents managed to find a flat which, in turn, was demolished. The penultimate V2 rocket to hit London landed on the site next to the lens factory, which was completely destroyed.

From 1945 until he retired in 1972 William was manager of the 'visualising' department at Harraps Publishing Company in which capacity he designed book-jackets and illustrated books.

In late 1972 his plan to buy property in Eynsham was resolved by the purchase of two cottages for which he designed the conversion into a home for himself and his mother, and which he called 'Monogram Cottage'. His monogram was the simple rectilinear combination of his initials

The house was ready for occupation in 1974 and soon afterwards he joined the Eynsham History Group and began to record the abbey stones he had noticed in walls and gardens in the village, although the search sometimes took him further afield; see, for example, his article 'Looking for Abbots' listed in the bibliography below. He also wrote detailed accounts of his grandfather's house in Acre End



Street, the Market House in the Square, and the Village Cross. Ills leaflet on the abbey stones was sold in support of the St Leonard's Church Restoration Fund. Full references to these publications are listed below.

The History Group enjoyed many slide shows, at least two being on classical Greek and Roman remains and the last (in 1990) on twenty-six Oxfordshire churches. William's hundreds of slides were meticulously numbered, dated and catalogued in his small neat handwriting. They comprise a record of battered post-war London, ancient remains in Greece and Italy, great houses, castles, and churches (especially in the Oxfordshire area), and above all, Eynsham, including the abbey stones. He left three large books of Eynsham photographic records which will, eventually be housed in the library. His two significant gifts to the village are the figure of St Leonard in a niche at the east end of the Parish Church, carved from one piece of limewood by Gwynneth Holt, wife of Bishop Eric Gordon, a past President of the Group; and the design of the replacement Market Cross.

In an addendum to his pamphlet on the Cross in 1991, William wrote that -"the design was based on old drawings and engravings, in particular a Bodleian drawing by J.C.Buckler of 1813 (MS Top Oxon a.66 fol.258) and one of 1790 by an unknown artist, in the Central Library, Oxford (1.1343). The figure sculptures, four in the base of the shaft and four in the niches at the corners of the base were too decayed to permit identification and it was decided to leave the the eight niches empty. It was also decided not to replace the multiple sundial at the top of the Cross, the dials of which were not part of the original but post-Reformation additions. On 4th and 6th February 1991 the new Cross was erected in seven sections, bonded within by a stainless steel rod. The writer deposited seven coins of the realm in the base. It is hoped that the New Market Cross will also, like its predecessor, stand for 600 years."

This passage testifies to his insistence on thorough research and on careful and precise recording. His immense fund of knowledge and his resources of film, books and notes were greatly appreciated in his lifetime, and he leaves unique archival material.

Those retirement years which, for William, were full of determination and vigour, have benefitted the village and its History Group, and we miss him.

[See over for a list of his Eynsham Publications]

**William Bainbridge's Eynsham publications**

(E.R. refers to this journal)

1978 *Eynsham Cross*. Leaflet published by Eynsham Conservation Area Advisory Committee for Eynsham Parish Council.

1980 *Visible Remains of Eynsham Abbey*. Leaflet privately published in aid of St Leonard's Church Restoration Appeal.

1984 Looking for Abbots. *E.R.* No.1, pp.14-18.

1985 Postscript to the above. *E.R.* No 2, p.19

1985 Eynsham's Market House. *ER.* No 2, pp.16-19.

1986 "Gran'papa's House". *E.R.* No.3, pp. 30-40.

1987 Some Thoughts on Eynsham Cross. *E.R.* No.4, pp.17-21.

1990 ?"Eynsham-on Avon"? *E.R.* No.7, p.46

## **FREDERICK WILLIAM WASTIE, APPLE BREEDER**

I incorrectly inferred some family connections in this article (E.R.no.19, pp.23-26).

Peggy, used in the names of two of the apples bred by the family, was the wife *not* of F.W. ('Old Fred') but of his son Fred; and Jennifer, after whom two other apples were named, was the daughter of 'young' Fred and Peggy.

I'm grateful to Mrs Alison Lynn, another descendant of F.W., for pointing out this misinterpretation.

In the light of subsequent suggestions it was also rash to have stated that "[Wastie's] orchard was almost certainly to the west side of Queen Street, towards the northern end, an area now built over". It would have been safer to state that it "may have been to the west side of Queen Street .....".

Brian Atkins

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A young man aged "about 20" drowned while bathing in the Thames on 22 June 1863, and was buried in St Leonard's churchyard two days later.

Quite a number of entries in the Parish Records refer to deaths by drowning, but this is unusual in that the victim was not identified.

# THE CELEBRATION OF VICTORIA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE IN EYNHAM IN 1887

by John Golby

'I can think of nothing else but Jubilee', so wrote the excited thirteen-year old Winston Churchill to his mother from his public school at Harrow.<sup>1</sup> He was not alone. Flora Thompson in her small North Oxfordshire village recalled how 'As the time drew nearer, the Queen and the Jubilee became the chief topic of conversation.'<sup>2</sup> The Queen had been on the throne for fifty years and by 1887 only a minority of people could remember any other British monarch, and no other monarch had headed a vast Empire which covered about one-fifth of the world's land surface. In order to celebrate the occasion, sumptuous events were being planned for London involving Victoria herself; but it was also hoped that local festivities would be held throughout the length and breadth of the country to honour the fifty-year reign.

Although the anniversary of Victoria's accession to the throne was not to be until the 20th June, from the earliest months of 1887 planning committees were set up in towns and villages throughout the country to raise funds and discuss (and on many occasions argue about) the most appropriate ways in which to celebrate the Jubilee. In Oxfordshire the principal inhabitants of Witney held a preliminary meeting towards the end of January to consider a number of proposals ranging from the building of a cottage hospital to the erection of a drinking fountain. A few weeks later members of the University and prominent townspeople of Oxford met together to discuss how they should best celebrate the Jubilee.<sup>3</sup> By March very many other villages and towns in the county were in the final stages of making their preparations. For example, the *Witney Express* for 17th March reported meetings taking place at Leafield, Woodstock and Wallingford. In Flora Thompson's village it was decided that it should combine with other local parishes to ensure that the event would be celebrated on a suitably large scale.<sup>4</sup> It seemed that every parish in Oxfordshire was preparing for the great event. That is, all except Eynsham.

Even in the early weeks of June, as towns and villages finalised their programmes for their own Jubilee celebrations and announced the dates on which these celebrations would be held - Witney's and South Leigh's were to be on the 21st; Stanton Harcourt's on the 27th; Oxford's and Filkins's on the 29th - there were no signs that any celebrations were being prepared in Eynsham.

It was not until 17th June, four days before the national day of celebration and on which the major events were to take place in London, that the inhabitants of Eynsham appeared to wake up to the fact that a Jubilee was to be celebrated. A preliminary meeting was called at the Infants School to discuss the Jubilee. With the vicar acting as chairman, a committee was formed, headed by the chemist, Henry Howe, and the station master, Charles Faulks, as secretary. The committee was empowered to seek subscriptions for a fund which, it was hoped, would be sufficient to 'give a dinner to all working men in the parish and a tea to the women and children.'<sup>5</sup>

Once set up, the committee acted quickly. Overall the appeal for subscriptions went well, although it seems to have brought to the surface old enmities within the parish. On 2nd July *Jackson's Oxford Journal* reported that 'the inhabitants and others (but with one exception)' had responded liberally to the appeal for funds. Enough had been collected 'to give the whole parish a substantial meal' as well as providing entertainments in the afternoon and evening.

The twelfth of July was earmarked as the main day of Eynsham's celebrations, although on 28th June Mr Walter Wilkins, the local house builder and a parish churchwarden, gave a treat to the children of the National Infant School by inviting them to a party in his garden in Mill Street. The children were provided with an unlimited supply of 'tea, plum cake and jam', after which there were games and the day ended with a firework display watched, not just by the children, but also by their parents. The day ended, so the newspaper report states, with the vicar urging the children to remember Her Majesty and this request was met by 'Vociferous and long-standing cheers'.<sup>6</sup>

The weather on the morning of 12th July started unpromisingly but as the day went on the weather improved. The village was festooned with decorations and many of the inhabitants had decorated their houses with flags and bunting. Festivities started officially at 2 p.m. when the children of the parish assembled at their schools and then marched to the market-place.<sup>7</sup> There they sang a Jubilee song 'with very good taste' to the tune of "Home Sweet Home", and then, escorted by the Freeland Brass Band, they processed to Joseph Druce's Lower Monkswood field, where a large tent, swingboats, roundabouts, coconut shies and shooting galleries had been set up. The 600 children then had tea and each child was presented with 'some pence' and a bag of sweetmeats. The tea was followed by amusements and games for the children.

Later in the afternoon it was the turn of the adults and some 1000 men and women partook of 'a capital meat tea'. This was followed by sports and dancing.

One of the entertainments was a greasy pole with a leg of mutton perched on top of it. The first person to climb the pole and strike the mutton with his hand three times could claim the prize. It was not until late evening that the task was accomplished and the successful contestant was carried around the field shoulder high triumphantly waving his leg of mutton in the air. As night fell, the field was illuminated with Chinese lanterns and fairy lamps and the climax of the celebrations began at 10 p.m. with a display of fireworks. This virtually concluded the entertainments, for after the fireworks the band played another dance and the day's events were wound up by the playing of the National Anthem.

Eynsham's Jubilee celebrations concluded on the evening of the following day when there was a further treat for the children attending the elementary schools. They assembled on the lawns of Abbey Farm, and were presented each with jubilee mugs which had been paid for by Mrs Lucas and other prominent ladies in the village.

The report in the *Witney Express* of the events in Eynsham started off with the remark that '...Eynsham was about the last place to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee...' But just why Eynsham's celebrations took place almost three weeks later than most of the other villages and towns is hard to unravel. One possible explanation may involve the commanding figure of the vicar of Eynsham, the Reverend William Simcox Bricknell. Very few events in the village over the past forty years had occurred without the close scrutiny or support of the Reverend Bricknell. His influence in the village was wide-ranging. As Lillian Wright has written he 'tried to rule the village single-handed' <sup>8</sup> and he very often did. But by 1887 Bricknell was 81 years of age and he was to die in May of the following year. A conscientious and assiduous magistrate he was chairman of, and a regular attender at, the Petty Sessions in Witney. However in the first few months of 1887 he was conspicuous by his absence and it was not until 26th May that he chaired his first session. <sup>9</sup> If the reason for his non-attendance at the Petty Sessions was ill-health then it is probable that the prominent members of the village were waiting upon the vicar to recover before calling a meeting to discuss the Jubilee. Bricknell chaired the inaugural meeting on 17th June and was present at all the Jubilee events occurring thereafter.

As it turned out, in the end, the form and content of Eynsham's Jubilee celebrations were similar to those held in many towns and villages throughout the country. Unfortunately there are no accounts existing of the celebrations in the village other than those reported in the local newspapers and so it is impossible to discover just what the villagers themselves thought about celebrating the fiftieth year of Victoria as monarch. There was not much to cheer agricultural workers at

this time. Unemployment was high in the county and consequently there was a high degree of poverty. In the towns too there was industrial discontent, unemployment, and the consequent accompanying poverty. When Victoria visited the Mile End Road in the East End of London on 14th May to open the new People's Palace, she was booed by certain sections of the crowd and in a parliamentary debate relating to the Jubilee celebrations some 84 MPs voted that the sum allocated for the event should be reduced from £7,000 to £2,000. Working people, so the MP for Camborne declared, "do not care two-pence halfpenny about the whole business."<sup>10</sup>

There is no evidence to point that this was the case in Eynsham and from the newspaper reports all we can deduce is that most people in the village willingly took the opportunity to have an extra day's holiday, partake of a free meal, and enthusiastically participate in a day when the entertainment was free.

Perhaps what we can learn about the village in 1887 is not by discussing what the ordinary villagers thought of Victoria's Jubilee but by looking again at the form the celebrations took. The prominent inhabitants of the village decided upon providing a meal and entertainments for the villagers and this shows a considerate and paternalistic concern for the poorer members of the community. This in itself demonstrates a village that is socially and economically split. Perhaps this is best shown in the telegram that the Reverend Bricknell sent to the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, at the height of the Eynsham celebrations. Ostensibly the message was to ask Sir Henry to present to the Queen the congratulations of the villagers and to wish 'health, peace and prosperity in the future'. But most revealing is the opening section of the telegram which states that the message comes from 'One thousand three hundred of the poorer inhabitants, with the Vicar and parishioners in general.' The population of Eynsham at this time was around 2,000.

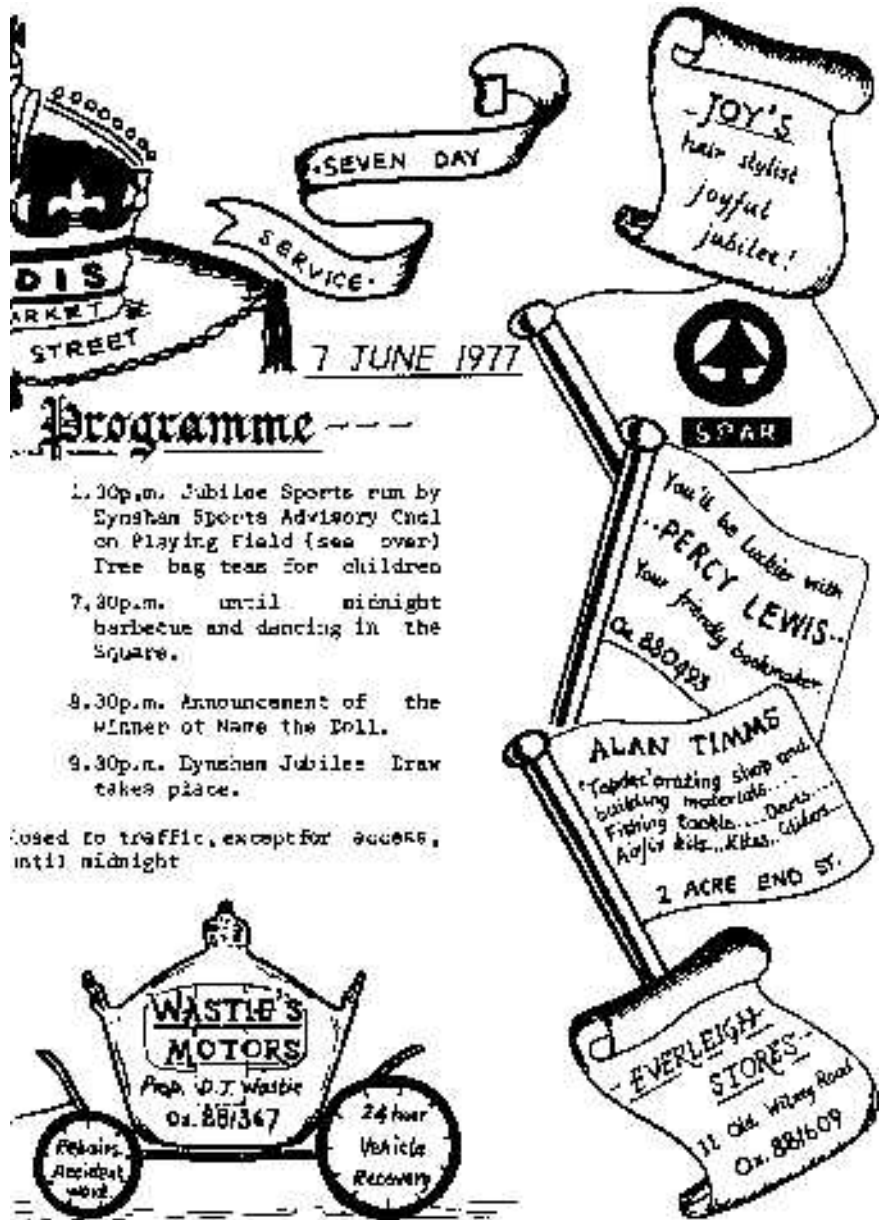
## References

1. Cited in Stanley Weintraub, *Victoria*, Unwin Hyman, 1987, p.5.
2. Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Penguin 1973 edn., p.239.
3. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 29 January and 26 February 1887.
4. Thompson, op. cit., p.243.
5. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 25 June 1887.
6. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 2 July 1887.
7. This account of the celebrations is taken from *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 16 July and the *Witney Express*, 14 July 1887.
8. Lillian Wright, "An Oxfordshire Clerical Family" in *ER.*, no.6, 1989.
9. *Witney Express*, 2 June 1887.
10. Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown*, Ashgate, 1997, p.58.



A reminder of Eynsham's celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977.





Twenty-five years later some of the advertisers are still in business

# EYNESHAM'S NEW MILLENNIUM VILLAGE HALL

by Fred Wright

When we moved to Eynsham in early 1963 the village lacked meeting places other than the churches, the pubs and the Institute in Swan Street. There were also huts for the Guides in Station Road, the Scouts, the Royal British Legion and a Youth Club in Back Lane. The best of these was the Institute, which was presented to the village by Major Oakeley (according to his daughter Mary) after the First World War, but it needed considerable renovation and became the present Social Club. There was also the Bartholomew School Hall, but the Primary School had not then been built, and the present Church Hall was a Methodist church.

Moves were made by the Parish Council and others to find a site and to try to fund a village hall, but little came of these efforts until the Parish Council purchased the disused Catholic Apostolic Church in Mill Street in 1980. This, however, proved unsuitable for conversion, was too small, and lacked an essential car park. It fell into disrepair and was sold and converted into a house in the later 1990s.

The present site in Back Lane, adjacent to the rear entrance of the Bartholomew School, is close to the large village car park (formerly part of the old vicarage garden, as is the Health Centre). According to Parish Council records this area was first mooted as the site for a new community centre in 1946, but instead of being developed as such at that time, the former Library, Scout, Royal British Legion and Youth Club huts were placed on it.

The site and its buildings became badly run down during the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1985 the Youth Club hut was condemned by a Government inspector; and in 1986 at a meeting of the Parish Council with the County Council it was minuted that the County Council "accepted the advantages to [the] Parish Council of owning [the] whole site" and that its "central position ... made it of great potential interest to the Parish Council ..." The trusteeship of the old Youth Club Charity was then transferred from the County Council to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council reopened negotiations with the Scouts and the British Legion in 1991, and drew up draft 'memoranda of understanding' with them.

In 1994 the Parish Council purchased from the County Council two end portions of the site, one containing the old Library and the other 'Mickey Sands' adjacent to the next house in order to further the plan for a community site.

In 1994-5 I represented the Parish Council at the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Enquiry and persuaded the Inspectors and Council to designate the whole of the Back Lane site (almost 0.5 acre) for use as a Community Centre (i.e. Village Hall and new Scout 'hut').

Prolonged negotiations took place with the Charity Commissioners to allow the Parish Council to take over the old Youth Club land, which it already held as trustee, the breakthrough being the finding of the original letters from the donors of the land stating that if it ceased to be used for a youth club it should revert to the village for the benefit of the boys and girls of Eynsham. This condition had not been made known to the Commissioners, but after seeing the letters they allowed the Parish Council to purchase this land from itself-as-Trustee for a Village Hall! Following this the Charity Commissioners and the Royal British Legion allowed the Parish Council to purchase the RBL land.

Further discussions took place with the Scouts who wished to be involved, but felt that they could not fully surrender the freehold of their site to the project, but would consider some land-swapping to allow the project to go ahead. This was eventually finalised in the summer of 2000, just in time to allow the present hall to be built.

### **Funding and architects**

About half of the cost of the project has come from funds raised or controlled by the Parish Council - sale of the former Catholic Apostolic Church, money raised by precept, donations and bank interest - the last not inconsiderable during the 1990s.

Three applications for Lottery grants were made to the Millennium Commissioners in 1995 and 1996. These were based on a design by Andrew Armes, with a large hall to the rear of the site and two side wings, one for the scouts, and the other for a children's hall. The scouts were not entirely happy with this arrangement, and as no Lottery grant was forthcoming, this plan was abandoned.

In 1997 Roy Wilkinson was appointed architect and it was he who drew up the successful scheme. In that year WODC announced its 'Millennium Village Hall' grants, with the original intention that projects using this money should be completed by 1st January 2000. As Eynsham already had outline plans it was able

to submit an application. However time-slippage occurred and the date was adjusted to 31st December 2000 for construction work to have started. In the meantime an alternative plan to combine the development with new sports facilities at Bartholomew School was presented to the Parish Council, who gave permission for this to be considered in parallel over a three month period. This time expired and as the final decision for a WODC grant had to be made by the end of June 2000, a Special Parish Council meeting was called in mid-June which opted for a Village Hall per se. When this was reported to the WODC Leisure and Tourism Committee a week later, the alternative plans (which would have given no ownership of any building or land to the PC) were on view to the public, and the committee supported the village hall plus the grant of approximately £350,000 - the largest to any village in West Oxfordshire. At this time the plans were a little over budget, but some savings were made, and the work commenced in late 2000.

The building started to be used in October 2001. It has a large main hall, a smaller 'Royal British Legion and Children's Hall', a large and smaller kitchen, and storage rooms. It is already used by several organisations on a regular basis, and is also available for private letting. The WODC placed planning conditions on the use of the hall, particularly to try to limit noise nuisance to local residents.

### **Public consultations**

A village appraisal was carried out in 1992-3 and the report was published in 1994. The report strongly recommended a new community centre or village hall. The Annual Parish Meeting of April 1994 approved the project in principle, and a special public meeting discussed the detail. The need to persuade the Scouts to participate was identified.

Soon afterwards a petition from some local residents in Back Lane urged that every effort be made to come to an agreement with the Scouts so that the whole area designated for community use is utilised with buildings and landscaping which enhanced the street scene. Concerns were expressed about parking.

In its reply the Parish Council pointed out the proximity of the village car park. At the Annual Parish Meeting on 25th April 1995, it was agreed to seek a grant from the Millennium Commission. Plans were exhibited at the Carnival in July of that year. Alternative plans showed three or four halls, depending on whether the Royal British Legion needed a separate one. This was not, in the event, required.

Further consultation continued with paragraphs detailing progress in the *Eynsham Echo*. A questionnaire to all village organisations revealed that most wished to use the small hall in the daytime, and the main hall in the evenings.

### **The present Scout Hut**

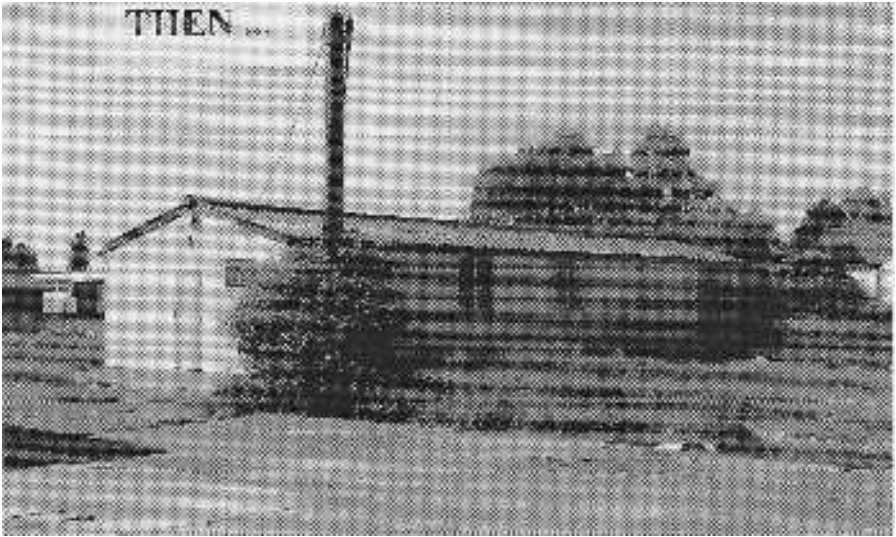
This was erected about 30 years ago, and is an industrial type building. Some years ago the roof was repaired, but the plumbing and toilet facilities and lighting were in need of modernisation, and the window frames showed considerable decay. The planning consent for the Village Hall included the proviso that the whole area (the Community Centre) should be comprehensively 'tidied up'. The old library building has been demolished, and the boundary wall bordering Back Lane has been rebuilt. A replacement store for the Scouts is being constructed on part of the site of the old library building. The Scouts would very much like to have a new Scout hut, to complement the Village Hall, and have planning consent for this. They have applied for Lottery grants, so far without success. The Parish Council at present holds some money from WODC to 'tidy up' the hut, which will have to be expended soon if other moneys are not forthcoming.

### **Management of the Village Hall**

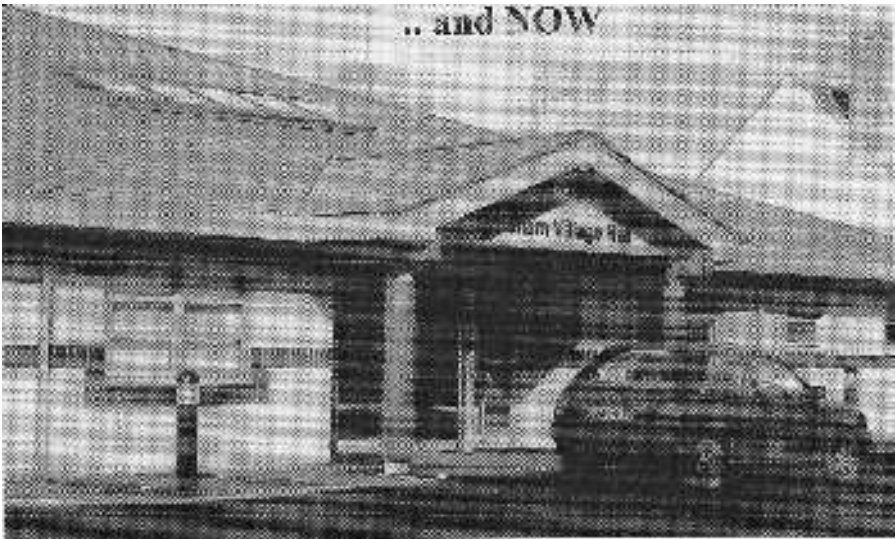
The Parish Council is currently finalising a lease and constitution for a Village Hall Management Committee, but will retain ownership of the land and buildings. It is hoped that lettings will cover the running costs.

### **Visitors to the Village Hall**

All users and visitors who have seen the Hall so far have praised it. A formal opening is being arranged for Saturday 1st June, the Queen's Golden Jubilee weekend.



The Royal British Legion hut in 1997. The site of the demolished Youth Club hut which was in parallel alignment is vaguely discernable in the grass to the right. (Photo courtesy of Martin Harris)



The new Village Hall in March 2002.

**NOTE:** the images opposite  
have been re-sized to reduce the overall size  
of this .pdf file.

Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in print for £1 plus p&p.

Contact the Editor Brian Atkins, 8 Thornbury Road tel 01865 881677 email

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or Fred Bennett, 68 Witney Road tel 01865 880659

### Note on abbreviations

Bodl..	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
Chambers, 1936	Chambers, E.K. <i>Eynsham under the Monks</i> . Oxfordshire Record Society, vol.18, 1936.
E.H.G.	Eynsham History Group.
<i>E.R.</i>	<i>Eynsham Record</i> .
<i>Eynsham Cart.</i>	<i>Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham</i> . Salter, H.E. (Ed.), (1 and 2) in 2 volumes, Oxford Historical Society, vol.49 (1907) & vol.51 (1908).
Gordon, 1990	Gordon, Eric. <i>Eynsham Abbey: 1005-1228</i> , Phillimore, 1990.
O.S.	Ordnance Survey.
Oxon. Archives	Oxfordshire Archives, (formerly Oxfordshire Record Office)
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
<i>V.C.H. Oxon.</i>	<i>The Victoria History of the County of Oxford</i> .

# MONKSWOOD POULTRY & FRUIT FARM,

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Many readers will know Moira Philcox, who recently left the village. Her father's letter-heads in 1930 and 1932 recall the days when he bred chickens, and it seems that he had promoted his business by 1932 to 'pedigree' status!



## **BELGIAN REFUGEES IN OXFORD AND EYNESHAM 1914-1918**

**by Pamela Richards**

During our research for the Junior History Group's article *What did you do in the Great War, Eynsham?*, in *ER*. No 12, pp.33-40, 1995 we came across references to refugees from Belgian who were accommodated in Eynsham. I was never satisfied that we had had time to look into the matter of these refugees and when I was suddenly presented with the chance to go to the region of Belgium from where they had fled I decided it was a good time to search more deeply.

Returning to the local newspapers of the period I found that the families who came to Eynsham were just a few of those who found some relief from their troubles in England.

The destruction of the University Library of Louvain, generally referred to as 'the burning', not only caused a feeling of outrage among academics but was responsible for the change of attitude to the war by the Church of England. Churchill described the contents of the library as 'beyond price'.

As a consequence, a Belgian Refugees' Relief Committee was set up in Oxford in September 1914. The committee consisted of men and women who were either connected with the University or the City Council. The main aim was to offer hospitality for the duration of the war to the professors and their families from Louvain and other Belgian universities.

While accompanying my husband to a conference at the Catholic University of Louvain (Leuven) in May, 2001, I was able to trace some of them. *The Oxford Times* of 24th October 1914 gave a list of no fewer than fifteen Belgian Professors who had come to Oxford, ten of whom had come from Louvain. Fortunately, at that period the records were written in French, not Flemish, so that through the Year Books of the University I was able to discover more about these men. They had mostly used Oxford as a 'staging post' before going on to 'resist the enemy' in their own particular way.

Some biographical details of these men form the second part of this article.

It was easy to accommodate these eminent academics, but how were the hundreds of artisans and working class Belgians who were arriving in England to be housed? They spoke no English and little French. In Oxford it was Ruskin College that came to the rescue.

Ruskin had decided that because of the disruption of the war the College would not open for residential students during the academic year 1914-15, although the Correspondence Department would continue. It was at first proposed that the College should be handed over to the Government for hospital purposes but when the need for a reception centre for refugees arose, the College immediately changed its proposal. All this was done although the Chairman of the College, C.W. Bowerman felt "deep regret that it should be necessary to interrupt to any degree the educational work of the college".

Dr. Slater of Ruskin arranged immediate accommodation for the refugees and the use of the College as a clearing house for the continual and ever increasing number of arrivals.

It was reported in the *Oxford Times* of September 26th, 1914, that thirty Belgian refugees had arrived in Oxford from Alexandra Palace in London and were received at Ruskin College where accommodation was being found for them. The institution was good at dealing with the practical matters of life.

On arrival the refugees were given a substantial supper before retiring. They were up early on the next morning, had breakfast, and when a representative from the *Oxford Journal Illustrated* called later in the morning they appeared to be having a happy time. It was reported that "a batch of about six little girls were skipping and laughing in the entrance with their mothers turning the rope and their fathers smoking, chatting and looking on contentedly". Several had been shown round the City, and were full of praise for Oxford, and like their fellow refugees, overflowing with thankfulness for the welcome they had received. There were nine families represented, but with several members missing, and all with different tales to tell. A 17 year-old engineer's apprentice named Richard Aerts of Louvain was alone. His father was dead and his mother, two brothers and sisters had been separated from him by the Germans. Practically all the refugees came from the Malines district of Belgium, and the majority were in the carpentry and furniture trade. There was only one agricultural family, which was the largest. It consisted of a father and seven children. Henri Schurs' 24-year old daughter could understand French but the rest of the family only spoke Flemish. When a reporter found him he was unable to attend the English class as he felt responsible for his children, the youngest of whom was four. He obviously felt very out of place away from his smallholding in Belgium and worried about what was happening to his home and his two other sons, one a prisoner of the Germans and the other still fighting. The kindly reporter offered him work in her garden and the prospect of other gardening jobs in the near future.

The task of finding work for the refugees was made difficult mainly because they knew no English. Out of the thirty refugees already at the College only one, a young tailor from Malines, named Jan Van Rode could speak a little English, and the majority of them could not speak French. The committee, ever resourceful, found a Miss Lees to give the refugees lessons in the English language every day. The refugees were considered 'bright and intelligent', and expected to pick up the language quickly.

Apart from being eager to find work they were all keen to recount their experiences and the one man who could speak English, Jan Van Rode, was very proud of something he had picked up on the battle field. The article looked like a flat ruler but when it was pulled in half, it was a knife and fork which shut into each other. It had belong to a German soldier. Van Rode, had been discharged from the Belgian Artillery because he had been deafened by the bursting of a shell close beside him. This meant he was no longer able to hear clearly the directions of the officer as to the target range. His discharge had been signed by a French Officer because at that time English and French officers were leading many of the Belgian troops.

To help meet the costs of looking after the refugees Oxford held a Belgian Day on November 7th 1914. The town was decked out in the Belgian colours of red, yellow and black, and the committee toured around in a decorated cart. The appeal hoped to raise £500. At the same time Balliol College was helping to organise the preparation of toys for the children for Christmas. A team was prepared to renovate old toys, particularly dolls, as it was noted that "vast numbers of toys usually sold in England were made in Germany, and cannot now be obtained".

The academics were easily placed and craftsmen also soon found lodging and occupation, but certain of the working class families proved difficult and it was noted in the minutes of the Oxford Refugee Housing Committee that four families had to be returned to London on account of bad conduct. Money raised was usually for the cost of lodgings, many of the refugees managing to pay for their own board. In August 1914 the prices of basic goods per pound were reported as sugar 41/2d, butter 1 s.6d, cheese 91/2d and bacon 1 s.4d. In September of that year Ruskin College was selling off its store of jam to the refugees at 5d per lb.

During 1914 to 1915 between three to four hundred refugees were dealt with by Ruskin College but by February 1916 it was able to set itself up as a hospital which was its original intention at the beginning of the war. In the *Ruskin*

*Collegian* Volume 5 no.8 it states that by January 1918 it was getting back to normal.

The Oxford University Press had also made its contribution to the provision of money for the Belgian Relief Fund. Members of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History had written a 264 page work *Why We are at War: Great Britain's Case*. It was translated into French, Italian, Swedish, Danish, Spanish and German by volunteers and distributed widely abroad. It did in a small way what the overseas service of the B.B.C. was to do in the Second World War. In November 1915 a cheque for £728. 1 s. 0d. was sent to the Belgian Minister in London. This was done as a "mark of sympathy and respect for the Belgian nation and especially for the University of Louvain. In 1920 a second and final payment of £176. 3s. 9d. was sent. In Louvain I was shown a copy of the Oxford University Homage to the University of Louvain dated November 17th 1919 which was given in Latin by Herbert Blakiston.

The Belgian refugees who came to Eynsham had not been in the first group to reach Oxford. The first mention of them is in the *Witney Gazette* of November 9th 1914 when six refugees arrived in Eynsham. Their reception and accommodation was more fully related in an article in *The Oxford limes* of November 28th 1914.

"To have a house-full of Belgian refugees is now quite a coveted distinction among the towns and villages of England. Eynsham, not to be behind others, has extended the hospitality to a party of six exiles, namely, M. and Mdme Bertens and their two children and two sisters, Mdles, Marie and Hortense Mertens."

Like Oxford, Eynsham had its Committee which had been elected at a well-attended meeting in the school. This consisted of the Vicar, Dr. Cruickshank, Messrs Hawkes, Hinds, Tindall, F. Green, Biggars, Belcher, Manning, Mrs Bricknell, Mrs Galton, Mrs Parker State, Mrs Evans, Miss Dean and Miss M Irvine. The parish had been divided into districts, and a canvass made, resulting in promises amounting to over £3 a week, chiefly in small sums.

On November 16th, all preparations being completed, the village made ready to receive its guests. The refugees were described as looking sad and anxious on their arrival, not surprising as they entered upon a new experience in an unknown country. However their expressions were changed by the warm and sympathetic welcome they were given by a large number of people assembled at the station.

They were escorted by the committee to their new homes, in two cottages, given for the purpose by Mr Galton, at the corner of Queen St. and Newland St. and furnished almost entirely by gifts from sympathisers. Like the refugees at Ruskin

College these came from Malines and were chairmakers by trade. They spoke nothing but Flemish but another refugee acted as an interpreter as he could speak French. M.Theophile Swinnen had arrived with the first group of refugees to reach Oxford and had made an impression on the reporters. Apparently he and his wife and baby son had been given a home by Mr Tindall, one of the Eynsham committee members.

Theophile Swinnen, a skilled chairmaker, was described by a reporter as 'a fine looking man of 32, who had been decorated for saving children from drowning'. He was not serving as a soldier because, until a few years before 1914 in Belgium there had been a method of drawing lots for military service. If a man drew a number which was above a certain 'cut-off' point he was free from the obligation. Theophile Swinnen had drawn a number above the limit, so for all his life he was free from the duty of serving. On his arm was marked the number he had drawn and his initials.

The attack on Malines had started one morning when a great shell had burst on the cathedral. The family had gone to live in the cellar, feeling safer there than in the house. Days of shelling and the constant crackle of the guns made him decide it would be better to leave. He had, like many others, made his way to Antwerp and taken a boat for England. The Uhlans [the German cavalry] had overrun the town and before he left he had helped to bury the dead, both of his own nation and the Germans. Much propaganda was made of German atrocities which was not dispelled by M. Swinnen's account of how the Germans made "haricot" of the dead bodies and how theirs were treated in return. There was a deep hatred and wish for vengeance. He told, too, how he and a cyclist friend were on the outskirts of Malines when suddenly nine Uhlans appeared. The cyclist was armed and shot at three of them, mortally wounding them. The others had run. It was likely that M. Swinnen and his friend had been on a hunting expedition for in another anecdote M. Swinnen spoke with affection of the dog he had left behind.

With his help the Housing Committee had been able to find out and supply their wants, and to understand something of their former history. The two sisters, Mdlles Mertens, had made their living by a small shop. They were away from home when Malines was attacked. On their return they found the town bombarded and their shop destroyed. It had been impossible to rescue anything from the ruins, so that at one sweep they had lost their home, their stock-in-trade and all their savings. They had had a long and complicated journey before eventually arriving in Eynsham.

Wednesday afternoons became 'at home' days at the Belgian Cottage. Neighbours flocked in to see how they were getting on. The language barrier meant that conversation was limited and communication restricted to friendly nods and smiles, and perhaps the giving of a bunch of flowers, or a toy. However, as always the children were quicker to pick up phrases and it was noted that 5-year old Rosalie Bertens was soon able to say a very pretty "Thank you Madam" for any gift, quite irrespective of whether the donor was a man or woman.

The sentiments expressed at this time were strong with a real wish to help the Belgians fit into the community, and it was felt that "nothing we can do for them can be too much in return for the self-sacrifice of their country in standing between us and a fate similar to that which has overtaken Belgium"

There were more refugees in January 1915 and in May of that year a couple of wounded Belgian soldiers came to convalesce. Some of the refugees moved on to Sheffield to find work but others were employed locally. By 1916 they were all considered to be self supporting. [see *E.R.* No. 12]

While it was possible to find out what had happened to the academics, trying to trace those who came to Eynsham has not yet been possible. Perhaps another trip to Belgium would be profitable, but they mainly speak Flemish in Malines and I don't.

### **The academic refugees**

The Belgian professors came with their families and their maids. Only two seem to have stayed in Oxford - Professor Charles Moeller who seems to have remained in Oxford until he returned to Louvain after the war to continue his teaching of Philosophy; and Professor of Chemistry, Paul Henry who died in Oxford on the 1st January 1917.

Of the others a number of them went on to France. Professor Georges Doutrepoint left Oxford and went to lecture first in Dijon and then in Paris, returning to Louvain after the war. He died in May 1941. Professor Leon Noel, the theologian and philosopher, had been arrested by the Germans during the occupation of Louvain, but had escaped. During the war he was secretary to the Anglo-Belgian University Committee at Oxford (1914-15), going, in 1916, to the Catholic Institute in Paris where he remained lecturing until 1918. He held a senior post at Louvain University until 1952.

Professor Albert Coppens, (1885-1966), originally a professor of civil and industrial engineering, was accommodated at St. John's College until he moved

to Paris to work with a consortium on the construction of motors for aviation and munitions. After the war he returned to Louvain University. He was also involved in the development of the Whittle Engine.

Professor Leon Van de Essen (1883-1963) was a professor in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at Louvain. During the war, leaving Oxford in 1915, he became visiting professor at the University of Chicago from where he conducted a mission of propaganda in the USA. He became attaché in the propaganda service for the Belgian Government established in London from 1916-17. He was the Chief Minister of the Cabinet (1917-18) and secretary to Prime Minister de Broqueville and Director of Political Documentation and Propaganda for Belgium in 1918. In 1919 he was attaché for the Belgian Delegation at the Peace Conference. He was appointed honorary Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

Like Professor Coppens the scientists put their knowledge to practical use. Professor G. Delmarcel was an industrial chemist and mining engineer and was at one time vice-consul to the Republic of Haiti. During the war he was a consul of the Ministry of Agriculture and a member of the Office of Industry in the Ministry of Industry and Works. He died at Ixelles on 30th May 1923.

Professor Fernand Ranwez, with his family, was first taken into the care of Sir Arthur Evans of Youlbury, Boar's Hill. During the war he worked as Director of the British Pharmaceutical Works Ltd. at Croydon, returning after the war to Louvain University to revive the School of Pharmacy and remaining director of the Pharmacy Laboratory until his death in 1925.

The Funeral Discourse given for Professor Bruylants tells much of the feelings of those who were forced to leave Belgium in 1914. Professor Bruylants would have preferred to stay in his university town, in the town of his birth, despite the German occupation, but he had two children and after many neighbours were killed and houses burned down it seemed expedient to leave. In Oxford the "workaholic" found himself reduced to a relative inaction. Without his own laboratory and his books and collections he felt a great sadness and wish to return to his own University and dear country. He returned with his wife to Louvain, probably through Holland which was neutral. One of the adventures they had was when the boat which was taking them back was attacked by a Zeppelin while it was waiting at anchor in the mouth of the Thames. On his return he waged a propaganda campaign against the enemy. He continued in post until he died in 1925.

Another well-known scholar Professor Jules Persyn who stayed in Oxford was from Antwerp not Louvain. He later wrote a book in English, entitled *A Glance at the Soul of the Low Countries*.

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### *Acknowledgements*

Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Oxford

Ruskin College Library

Archivist Marc Derez, Library of the Catholic University of Leuven [Louvain]

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The Martyrs Memorial, Oxford.

This famous monument which commemorates the Protestant clerics, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer burnt at the stake in the Broad in the 16th century, was funded by public subscription. Among the donors listed in 1841 were the Revd. W.S. Bricknell, Worcester College (£3 3s. 0d) and his wife (£2 2s. 0d).

Four years later in 1845, William Simcox Bricknell was to become Eynsham's vicar.





Christmas is past, but readers may be interested in the image reproduced above.

It was made by J.R.R. Tolkien, one of a series of letters and pictures he sent to his children between 1920 and 1943 in response to his 3-year old son, John, who asked what Father Christmas was like and where he lived. The initials N.C. stand for Nicholas Claus.

John became Eynsham's priest at St Peter's Catholic Church from November 1987 until June 1994.

© The Trustees of the Tolkien Trust 2001.

The Bodleian Library holds the original red and black illustration. (MS. Tolkien drawings 55).

## THE CLOCK RESTORED

by Clive Brimson

Some years ago, Lilian Wright published an article in this journal entitled "For the Clock Exchaynged" This dealt with a new clock on St Leonard's Church tower replacing an earlier one in 1640. This clock, in turn, was replaced in 1964. What happened to it?

I first set eyes on the clock in the summer of 1988 when I visited 'Combe Mill in steam' shortly after moving to Freeland. It was in a cardboard box, looking in a rather sorry state. "Who is looking after this?", I asked one of the Combe Mill Society members on duty that day. "Nobody at present" was the answer, and so I joined the Society to give the old clock some 'tender, loving care'.

Ten years previously I had become interested in long-case clocks having bought one that needed the odd tweak here and there. I became an associate member of the British Horological Institute, joined the Oxford branch and later began its 3-year correspondence course in horology. The move to Freeland put that on hold, but not before I had gained considerably in knowledge and skill. The box of pieces was, after all, only a very large long-case clock, and so I set to work.

A book could be written on the philosophy of 'conservation' versus 'preservation' of historic pieces such as this, and I had learned enough from my readings to realise that one should not do anything that was detrimental to its present state. A survey showed that the pendulum had no suspension spring and that the rod was broken: Bushes (bearings) for the various arbors (axles) to run in were either well worn or missing: The 'escape wheel' (the spikey wheel that causes the 'tick tock') had every tooth badly distorted, and the pallets of the 'anchor escapement' (the piece that looks that looks like an anchor upside down, and engages the escape wheel) were very badly worn.

So what did I do?

The first thing was to calculate the theoretical length of the pendulum. This turned out to be 45 inches, making it slightly longer than a 'seconds' or 'royal' pendulum. An old piece of clock-spring was cut to length, fixed to a steel block that would hang from the clock's back-cock and, using the original rivet hole, attached it to the top of the pendulum rod. The bottom, screw section of the rod was fractured but, fortunately, the detached piece was available. The break would be located inside the pendulum-bob and any repair would not be seen. A small peg was turned and threaded and screwed into each broken end to effect a join. It now came the turn of the terribly mangled 'escape wheel' to have attention. With very

gentle tapping with a hammer I was able to straighten each tooth without any further damage. Once new bushes had been made where required and the clock rebuilt, it became apparent that the worn 'pallets' mentioned previously would no longer allow the clock to work - probably the reason for replacing it. In the past a new item would have to have been constructed but this was not the past, it was me saddled with things as I found them. An idea occurred to me (that I have since read about as being an accepted method of overcoming the problem) to fit eccentric bushes to allow the depthing of the pallets to be adjusted. Even this, unfortunately, did not allow enough movement to take up the wear. What next? Well if 200 years of wear had taken the metal off I would put some back on! If only super-glue had been available in 1964, then there would have been no need to buy a new clock. Now, four or five times a year, when Combe Mill is in steam, three turret clocks, or tower clocks, or church clocks, call them what you will, spanning 350 years or so, tick away illustrating the development in timekeeping from the 'pendulum and verge escapement' (St Peter & St Paul, Church Hanborough) through the 'anchor escapement' (St Leonard's) to the Graham 'deadbeat escapement' (provenance unknown), circa 1650, 1750 and 1850 respectively.

St Leonard's 18th century turret clock was probably made by John May of Witney as he had an annual contract of 3 shillings for keeping the clock in repair until 1798. Various, more recent repairs are apparent, including welding and brazing, which only go to show that these clocks, although cherished now as historical artefacts were, in their day, merely functional items which had to be kept going for as long *as* possible. It is interesting to conjecture that some misunderstanding might have resulted in the pendulum rod needing to be the interesting shape that it is. Normally it would have been a straight piece of iron but, in this case, that would have caused it to hit the 'drive' to the hands each time it swung! You will notice in the photograph that it was made with a large loop in it to overcome this embarrassing design fault. Most clocks of my experience have one wheel rotating once in an hour, and connected to the 'minute hand'. The Eynsham clock has its great wheel revolving once in two hours, requiring extra mechanism for the 'minute hand' and the 'striking train'.

And finally, how might the escape wheel have been so badly damaged? Surely no vandal would have done such a thing. The answer may be in the way old clocks were altered to read correctly when they had gained or lost time. There were no 'slipping clutches' on these early clocks, and so you could not adjust the the hands without graunching the wheels in the clock. If it were 'fast' the clock would be stopped until it read correctly and then restarted. If, however, it was

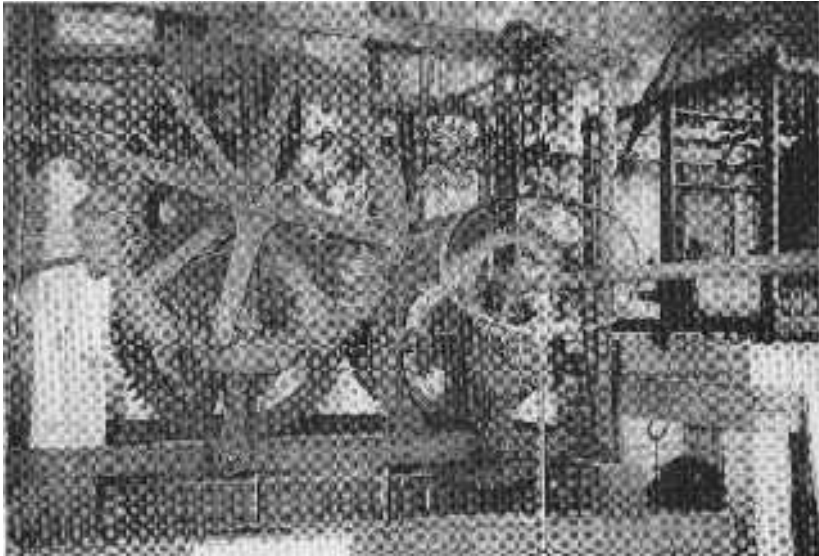
"slow', the only way was to disconnect the 'anchor' from the escape-wheel and let it run rapidly until someone outside shouted "Stop!". I suspect that the last time this was attempted the operator tried to arrest the quickly spinning escape-wheel by trying to re-engage the 'anchor' rather than stopping the wheel's rotation first. If any reader has a view on this theory, I would be delighted to hear it.

The restored clock is on display at Combe Mill when this is 'in steam' and open to the public; forthcoming dates in 2002 are 19th May, 18 August and 20 October.

#### Reference and Notes

1. Lilian Wright, *"For the Clock Exchaynged"*, *ER*. no. 4, pp.26-29, 1987.

See also 'Then & Now' pp. 22-23 of the same issue. The illustrations are of the church in the early 19th century, showing a diamond-shaped clock face set low on the tower, and today's circular clock face set above the second string course. The caption below the earlier picture is incorrect. The clock was relocated sometime in the second half of the 19th century, not in 1964 when the mechanism was replaced.



The clock mechanism. The shaft to the right drives the hands. The slender vertical shaft is the upper part of the pendulum, altogether 45 inches long. The curious oval loop on the pendulum allows it to swing without hitting the drive shaft. Scale: The metal frame is 33 x 22 x 18 inches.

## **EYNESHAM**

### **HORTICULTURAL AND ROOT SHOW**

WILL be held in a FIELD near the STATION, kindly lent by Mrs. S. DRUCE,

ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 16TH.

A CRICKET MATCH will be Played on the Ground.

### **A BAZAAR**

Will also be held on the Ground, in Aid of the Show.

A good BAND will be in attendance.

Grounds open from 8 to 10 for reception of Exhibits.

ADMISSION--1 to 3; 1s.; 3 to 6, 6d.; 6 to 7, 3d.

W. B. HOWE, Hon. Secretary.

This announcement appeared in Jackson's Oxford Journal in 1887.  
It was the fourth in a series of horticultural shows in the village.

# OSCAR MELLOR, PRINTER AND ARTIST

by Don Chapman

Peter Way's article on the Fantasy Press in the last issue of the Eynsham Record<sup>1</sup> revived fond memories of Elizabeth Jennings and Oscar Mellor.

I cannot pretend to have known the poet, Elizabeth Jennings, who died recently; except that she often stamped my books when she was assistant at the Oxford Central Library in St Aldate's (where the Museum of Oxford is now), and I was a pupil at the Boys High School (now the University Institute for Social Studies) in George Street. The artist, photographer, and printer, Oscar Mellor, became a firm friend after I commissioned him to design and print the 1956 issue of *The Wheel*, the magazine of St Catherine's Society (now St Catherine's College).

I can remember cycling to his little cottage at Swinford from my home at Dean Court to deliver the copy, correcting the proofs, and bearing proudly back to St Cat's what, after all these years, I still think of as a classic example of Fantasy Press printing.

Oscar's wife, Iris, and their flaxen-haired daughters would usher me into a tiny living room and Oscar would leave off treading the foot-powered press which dominated an even tinier kitchen to greet me in his engagingly diffident manner.

The clutch of poets, later to become well-known, whom he helped to incubate, will guarantee the Fantasy Press an honourable mention in 20th century literary history. The six or seven poem pamphlets are now collectors' items, changing hands at many, many times their original asking price of ninepence. They were only one string to Oscar's bow. He was an equally accomplished painter and photographer, often demonstrating both talents in his Salvador Dali-esque landscapes with nudes.

He was born in Manchester on 7 June 1921, where he grew up. He moved to Birmingham with his family shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, working as a progress-chaser for Air Tubes until he joined the RAF. After serving as a fighter pilot, escorting long-range bombing missions, he worked for a succession of electroplating firms while he studied at Birmingham College of Art. He moved to Oxford with Iris in 1948 to become a full-time student at the Ruskin School of Art.

As Peter Way wrote, the Fantasy Press was meant to subsidise his painting after he completed his studies in 1951. For a time the success of the Fantasy Poets

threatened to turn it into a full-time occupation. In a weak moment he even agreed to help out the Oxford Playhouse for a couple of weeks during a printing strike, working round the clock to produce programmes by the thousand on a press the normal run of which was no more than three hundred.

After the break-up of his marriage Oscar moved to a basement studio in George Street, Oxford, where the University Poetry Society held its committee meetings. He worked backstage at both the Playhouse and the Apollo Theatre to supplement his income, and for a spell photographed Playhouse productions. Sean Connery and Prunella Scales were among the little known actors who posed for him.

He left Oxford in 1969 to become a lecturer at Exeter College of Art, a post he held until 1973, then resumed full-time painting. Occasionally he would talk of reviving the Fantasy Press to provide a platform for a new generation of poets, but he never got round to it.

A stroke forced him to leave his studio in Clyst St Mary and move into an Exmoor nursing home about five years ago. There I interviewed him in 1999 for my history of the Oxford Playhouse, still surrounded by paintings, easel and palette but, alas, no longer able to wield a paintbrush - nor to send out his strikingly original Christmas cards, the unadorned female form prominent, which my wife Sue could never quite bring herself to put on display with the more conventional nativity scenes and robins.

### *Reference*

Peter Way, *The Fantasy Press*, *E.R.* no.18, pp. 35-37, 2001



## **END OF AN ERA**

### **Meals on Wheels in Eynsham 1965-2002**

**by Pat Atkins**

Meals on wheels were started by the WVS just after W.W.II, following in the steps of the Agricultural Pie Scheme for farm workers during the war. It was, in effect, the modern equivalent of the help given to the sick and needy in the community by caring people over many centuries. Delivered by volunteers on a variety of wheels, including prams, bicycles, landrovers and cars, the meals were frequently cooked in the kitchens of WVS members, and in the days of austerity after the war, provided a hot, two course meal for those unable to cook their own.

Oxford City started a Meals on Wheels service in 1946, and at that time the meal cost 1s.3d. [6p]. The scheme spread to become countywide, and in November 1965 Mary Streat pioneered a scheme in Eynsham. The meals were delivered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 18 meals were authorised. At first the meals were cooked at Truby's Cafe which was at the north end of Hanborough Road, near the A.40. Soon, however, the provider was the canteen of Kinlochs, a wholesale grocer on the industrial estate on Stanton Harcourt Road when Kinlochs closed, the Swan Hotel, and the Primary School stepped in. For Mary Streat it was a worry finding a suitable provider, and at one time she was heating frozen meals in her own kitchen. For the last few years the catering service at Oxford Magnet Technology has been the supplier.

The meals were hot, consisting of a main course (meat or fish and 2 veg.) and a pudding. There was normally no choice, although occasionally special diets were provided.

For a long time the meals came in covered metal containers in a specially designed box called a Hotlock which was heated in the base by charcoal. The food was transferred onto the recipient's own plates, and gravy and custard came in Thermos flasks. At the end of the round, the box and containers (at one stage washed up by the volunteers) would be returned to the provider for the next round.

More recently, the meals have come in the familiar aluminium foil take-away containers, kept hot in padded boxes.

The volunteers worked to a rota, in pairs, a driver and a helper. Normally your turn came round once a month, and it took about 1½ hours to complete the delivery. Most of the volunteers were women although men did help out sometimes, and for a while my toddler came along too.

Most, but not all, of the recipients were elderly, and as they came from all walks of life, had many interesting tales to tell. I learnt a lot about Eynsham from meeting some who had lived here all their lives and who would tell of the changes they had seen.

As Social Services became more involved, the criteria for qualifying for the service became tighter. Often the meal was part of a package of help being provided by professionals. As the Social Service budget became restricted, a frozen meals service was introduced for some people. This was delivered by a commercial contractor, and had the advantage of allowing the recipient to choose from a menu, and when to eat the food. However, the personal contact was lost, and for some it was too difficult to cope with heating the meal.

In October 2000, the County Council decided to stop all hot meal deliveries in Oxfordshire. Services in the towns ceased by March 2001. A few rural areas such as Eynsham continued, but the numbers dropped, and no new recipients were allowed. In February 2002, the service in Eynsham closed. The final recipients were then paying £2.25 for the meal. Mary Streat had delivered meals throughout the 37 years.

All those who have been involved will have memories of Meals on Wheels - some happy, meeting people and hearing their stories, and sadness when their health deteriorated. We all remember the family photographs on the sideboard, and of those (and there were a good number) telling you that it was their 90th birthday that month; how heavy the Hotlock was to carry up and down the steep steps at Kinlochs, and the dreaded Thermos flasks - would the contents last the course or, even worse, would you pour custard on the meat by mistake? There was anxiety when no-one responded to our call although nearly always there was a good reason for this. I remember Miss Goodwin (ex-teacher) reprimanding us if we were late, Alec Chalmers offering us glasses of sherry, and Hugh Cooper (erstwhile President of the EHG) always having two wrapped sweets ready for us.

I think the volunteerers got as much out of Meals of Wheels as those they were helping. Times change - people are able to look after themselves for longer now, and the State provides more care, but I and many others will miss this part of village life.

#### Acknowledgements

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# **EYNESHAM HISTORY GROUP**

## **Founded 1959**

The ERG. exists primarily to encourage studies in, and to promote knowledge of the history of the village and parish of Eynsham, Oxfordshire, by means of regular meetings (normally at least ten), with invited speakers, during the winter and spring; and occasional outings in the summer.

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