

Local clubs, societies and pastimes

The Deddington news reports in the Banbury and Oxford papers in the 1850s suggest that, with the notable exception of the Cricket Club and the Horticultural Society described elsewhere, there was otherwise a paucity of clubs and societies in the town.

The Buccleuch Archery Club was formed in September 1857, and attracted some 60 members. While its first anniversary was a very successful joint celebration with the 21st anniversary show of the Deddington Horticultural Society on the Castle Ground, it was more Adderbury focused. C.D. Faulkner (31) was hon. secretary and treasurer. Both Mr. Faulkner and his wife, Elizabeth, were capable archers, winning prizes at tournaments.

Archery tournaments continued to be held on the Castle Ground under the aegis of the 'Edgehill and Deddington Archery and Bowling Society' (per the *Banbury Advertiser*) or the 'Deddington and Edgehill Archery Association' (per the *Oxford Chronicle*).

A corner of the Castle Ground was also chosen as the site for the erection in 1860 of a large rustic pavilion of wood and thatch. Whilst intended as a ballroom for the county set, it was also ideally placed to provide refreshments for adjacent cricket and archery matches.

The first major social event at the Pavilion was in connection with an archery tournament on the Castle Ground on 7 August 1860, a "brilliant assembly" attended by 80-90 ladies and gentlemen, the ladies being the more proficient *marksmen*. An excellent cold collation was served in the Pavilion by Mr. Sturch of the Unicorn Inn. In the evening there was dancing in the illuminated pavilion "to the dulcet strains of Mr. Mathews's Quadrille Band, Oxford, [which] occupied the company till an early hour".

The *Oxford Chronicle* commented: "The *élite* of the neighbourhood were present on the occasion, and the whole affair passed off with great *éclat*."

Below are several extracts from Mary Vane Turner's description of the Pavilion.¹

Where the historian Leland states so laconically 'there hath been a castle' — still remain the Castle Grounds. Here from about the middle of the nineteenth century till the first decade of the twentieth, situated on the right-hand side of the present bowling-green, stood the remarkable structure called the Pavilion. It was so large that it contained a spacious ballroom with musicians' gallery, cloakrooms and a refreshment room. The whole was covered by an immense roof of thatch.

Inside the ballroom walls were hung with glistening chintz in a floral design and at intervals gas jets were arranged round in star-like clusters. Dance music was provided by a band from Oxford, invariably including a harp.

¹ Mary Vane Turner, *The Story of Deddington*, Chapter 8 (Sports and Pastimes), 1933.
<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/publishedhistories/mvt/8.sportsandpastimes>

The Society gatherings there were brilliant and exclusively 'County'. Deddington could have no share in those functions except such satisfaction as might be obtained from gazing upon the smart equipages which went towards the entrance gate full, returning empty to park in the market place. Sometimes the ball had been preceded by an Archery tournament, then it was the custom of ladies, whose homes were at a distance, to dress at the King's Arms or the Unicorn. Another chance for Deddingtonians to catch a glimpse of beauty, though in all probability voluminously cloaked.

The Sparrow Club was a shooting club supported by local farmers. Their object was to seek to reduce the damage to crops caused by sparrows, which were regarded as vermin. According to the *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times* in October 1850, "During the existence of this Club upwards of 10,000 birds have been killed". The members met at the principal public houses in Deddington for half-yearly suppers. After an excellent meal at the Red Lion Inn in November 1858, "the song and glass passed round in a right convivial manner".

There would be an occasional concert, with a programme of songs, such as a Patriotic Fund concert in January 1855 in connection with the Crimean War, and a short-lived Church Choral Society in 1853-1854, which was active during the tenure of the Rev. George Venables whilst assistant curate. In May 1854 there was a presentation by the Choral Society to Miss E.B. (Ellen) Faulkner, Charles Faulkner's daughter, "in remembrance of her kindness and constant attendance at the organ and at the lessons."

The Church Missionary Society used to hold regular meetings at various venues in the parish. Its meetings usually featured clerical speakers. Charles Faulkner was sometimes a speaker. At the annual meeting in April 1853 in the old Girls' school room, over 160 were present. There were also well attended meetings of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Public lectures were popular, and seem to have been organised largely on an *ad hoc* basis. The speaker was often one of the curates. The first event in the new National School buildings in September 1853 was a lecture on Secret Correspondence, Ancient and Modern, and Telegraphic Communication, followed a week later by a lecture by Sir Henry Dryden on church music.

In November 1854 there was a well-attended two-hour lecture on Slavery in America in the Wesleyan Reform chapel. A resolution condemning slavery was unanimously passed at the end of the meeting.

A Reading Room and Public Library, under a management committee, opened in July 1858, initially in a rented cottage, but in January 1859 it moved to the Town Hall, which had been thoroughly repaired and lighted with gas. Subscribers could consult daily and weekly newspapers, and 150 volumes. The subscription was 2d. per week in winter, and 1d. during the summer, "to place it within reach of all classes".

This enabled the establishment of a regular series of lectures during the winter months. The inaugural lecture was given by the President of the Reading Room, Holford C. Risley, eldest son of the Rev. W.C. Risley, on the subject of Mount

Vesuvius. "The Hall was crowded to suffocation by a most respectable audience." For the third lecture of the first season, Charles Faulkner spoke on Charles I and Deddington's civil war connections. The hall was crammed full and people were turned away at the door.