

# OBITUARIES

## ELLIOTT VINEY

D.S.O., M.B.E., M.A., T.D., J.P., D.L., F.S.A.

*This obituary owes much to the two addresses given at the Memorial Service at Aylesbury on 30th October 2002, as well as to archives and recollections from many sources.*

Elliott Merriam Viney, for as long as many of us can recollect, a pillar of our Society, passed away on 9th August 2002 shortly before his 89th birthday. Though in declining health for several months he was active until the end of July. The eldest of four sons of Colonel O.V. Viney, he was born in Wendover Road, Aylesbury on 21st August 1913 and was educated at Oundle followed by University College, Oxford, where he read history and obtained his degree of Master of Arts.

Upon coming down from Oxford, as was natural he went into the family printing firm of Hazell, Watson and Viney in Aylesbury. At about the same time he joined the Territorial Army in the Bucks Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, of which his father was Commanding Officer.

Then in 1939 came the Second World War. At the beginning of 1940 the Battalion went to France and by the time of the German onslaught in May it was stationed at Hazebrouck, a small town close to the Belgian border. The Battalion put up a strong rearguard action which almost certainly prevented the German army from reaching the coast sooner than it did, thus enabling the miraculous evacuation from Dunkirk. The Bucks Battalion suffered severe casualties and by the time that they were compelled to surrender Elliott was in command, with the rank of Acting Major at the age of 26; for this he was awarded the D.S.O. He spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner in Germany, being moved in 1942 to Oflag VIIIB.

Whilst in Oflag VIIIB he took over the editorship of the camp magazine 'Touchstone', ran the library and organised courses. During the war letters from him were printed in the house magazine of Hazell, Watson & Viney and the following are some extracts:



*Elliott Viney at Green End House, Rickford's Hill, Aylesbury, reflecting an earlier portrait of William Rickford at the same window.*

*20th September 1942 (received 2nd January 1943). 'You have probably gathered that we have moved. .... It took a fortnight to pack up, but we hope everything will arrive, including my 63 crates of library books; I have got most of my heavy luggage. It was a delightful journey in lovely weather and we were only 24 hours in the train in great luxury — 2nd class coaches! I thoroughly enjoyed it. This camp is a great change. There are three big blocks of three-storey buildings, each holding about 250. I am in one of these in a room of 16. A fourth block contains canteen, kitchen, chapel and (I hope) a library.'*

8th November 1942 (received 1st January 1943). 'Why wasn't I taught to darn at school? It seems a grave omission. We unmarried ones here will make awfully good uncomplaining husbands, prepared to eat five courses off one plate and make one shoe-polish last a week; and we'll never question a laundry bill, and even the ugliest ought to find a market when it is known he can make a box of matches last a week, a pencil six weeks, and a roll of lavatory paper six months! All good practice for the New Order, you see. In fact, I can now economise on everything.'

19th November 1942 (received 1st January 1943). 'We have had some exams here last week and there are plenty more coming off, but I have not been able to organise any other educational work. The library has now all been released, so I hope to get started next week. It is no joke getting 12,000 books into one small room, and it looks rather like the Aylesbury Works library. Also, owing to the hand-cuffing, the S.B.O. uses it as an office in the mornings. (Accompanying this is a cartoon depicting Hitler and other minions carrying piles of books, some of which they are dropping, and the caption: 'Herr Viney must read a lot!')

For his gallant services whilst a Prisoner of War he was appointed an M.B.E. in 1946. Shortly after the war he returned to Germany to serve on the Control Commission. Thereafter he kept up his regimental connections remaining in the Territorial Army until 1988, being President of the Bucks Battalion Old Comrades Association from 1960; in due course being awarded the Territorial Decoration.

In 1950 Elliott married Rosamund Pelly and they had two children, Diana and Louise. One of his recreations was mountaineering and even when he was up at Oxford this was evident since he became President of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club being elected to the Alpine Club after 1945. His *tour de force* was probably climbing Mont Blanc and he spent many happy holidays climbing in North Wales, Lake District and Skye. Another activity was beagling, being Field Master of the Old Berkeley Beagles from 1952 to 1975.

As is obvious from his time as a prisoner of war, Elliott was a bibliophile and a great reader. In 1930 he commenced a record of books that he had read and by May 2002 was able to say that it had

reached a total of 6,620, a stupendous achievement. Another of his interests was music having a vast collection of records and discs; he was President of the Aylesbury Orchestral Society from 1952 until 1968. After the war he returned to Hazell Watson & Viney, becoming Chairman in 1967. The firm was eventually taken over and Elliott became a Director of the British Printing Corporation.

But it is as our Honorary Secretary and President that we remember him. He held the first post for a quarter of a century, 1954–1979, then succeeding the late Clive Rouse as President from 1979–1998; in addition he was Assistant Editor of *Records of Bucks* from 1947–1974. During the time that he was Hon. Secretary the Society reached a new agreement with the County Council in 1957 whereby the latter leased the Society's buildings for a museum and took over its running; this was most fortunate as very extensive and expensive repairs had to be carried out between March 1989 and 25th October 1995, during which time the Society's buildings in Church Street were closed to the public. He was also a Library trustee. From 1958 Elliott organised the Society's outings (recorded as totalling 182 by 1992), of which the annual 'Bucks Church Crawl' was eagerly anticipated since he knew every church in the county intimately, he was very generous with his wide-ranging knowledge of the county, always being willing to provide answers to queries and to advise the enquirer.

In 1964 he had the privilege and honour to be High Sheriff of the county, like his father before him, and subsequently published *The Sheriffs of Buckinghamshire*, a magisterial listing of the holders of the office from the earliest days complete with biographies. From *Who's Who* we learn of some of the panoply of his other interests and bodies with which he was involved: elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (London) in 1966, Governor and Trustee, Museum of London, 1972–88; President of British Federation of Master Printers, 1972–73; Master of the Grocers' Company, 1970–71; County Director of Bucks St. John Ambulance Association, 1953–55; President of the Buckinghamshire Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, 1990–93 and Chairman of Bucks Record Society for many years; Justice of the Peace, 1950; Deputy Lieutenant, 1952; Order of St. John, 1953. To these we can add that he was very supportive of the work of Patricia Fay, in setting up what was

originally a Bucks Society but eventually became national – The National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies. He was a member for almost twenty-five years of The Oxford Diocesan Advisory Committee to which he brought great wisdom and scholarship, a founder trustee of the Bucks Historic Churches Trust and for many years Chairman of the Inspection Committee, a trustee of The Bucks Clergy Charity, as well as churchwarden at Aylesbury for seventeen years and subsequently at Quainton for five years.

His publications in *Records of Bucks* include:

1972. 'The Buckinghamshire Lieutenancy.' Vol. 19 part 2, 113–140  
 1978 'The Royal Arms in Buckinghamshire Churches' Vol. 20, part 4, 553–562  
 1982 'Royal Arms in Buckinghamshire Churches' [addendum] Vol. 24, 181  
 1988. 'A history of the Society: Part I, 1847–97' Vol. 30, 170–177  
 1996. 'A history of the Society: part II 1897–1947, Vol. 38, 109–124

1991. 'Buckinghamshire churches in the 1840's' Vol. 33, 68–86  
 2003. Aylesbury Steeplechase .. this volume

Other published historical material includes:

1965. *The Sheriffs of Buckinghamshire; from the eleventh century to the present day.* Aylesbury  
 1976. *Old Aylesbury*, with Pamela Nightingale. White Crescent Press, Luton.  
 1985. *Aylesbury Association for the Protection of Persons and Property 1785–1985.* Peterhouse Press, Wendover.  
 2000. *Never Fear to Die: some epitaphs from Bucks Churches.* Privately printed.  
 2001. *Literary Bucks; A talk by Elliott Viney.* Peterhouse Press, Brill.  
 2002 'Notes and Queries' *The Chapels Society Newsletter* 27, December 2002 [a note about EV's grandfather (1851–1906) who was involved in founding Hazell, Watson and Viney and was a deacon at Highbury Union Chapel]

*Requiescat in pace*

JC

## JEFFREY DAVID HAWKINS

*The following thoughts were provided by his friend Don Levy:*

Jeffrey David Hawkins of Pitstone Green Farm (1st December 1921–16th December 2001)

Jeff is dead. He was 80 on December 1st 2001 and we went to a BAS meeting at Aylesbury Museum. On the Sunday to a walk for farmers who were taking part in a RSPB census at Otmoor. He was happy. A fortnight later he was dead. Feeling ill on the Wednesday and refusing help, he had driven himself to hospital where he died on the Sunday. Jill had asked me to prepare an address for the surprise party we were giving him at the Pitstone Society's December meeting. Instead I am writing this.

Jeff's family came to Pitstone Green in 1808. They were leading figures in the parish, helping to build the chapel and serving as Overseers of the Highways. Jeff inherited this tradition of service.

He grew up in the 1930's when life on the farm was very hard. Nothing must be wasted or thrown away. He recycled before recycling was invented and then recycled that which had already been recycled. It was the same with money. Wherever possible you kept it in the business. If you did not know how to do something then you went out and learnt. You did not spend where you could avoid it, because that was waste. Having farmed throughout the war when you could lose land and home for not producing to the utmost, he could not understand the throwaway society.

He went to Berkhamsted Grammar School, which he did not enjoy, and Oaklands Farm Institute at St Albans which he did greatly. The war ended his formal education and he came back to work on the farm. Feeding people was important. Joining the Home Guard he was made dispatch rider because he had a motor bike. There were many discussion groups to help increase food pro-

duction and farming walks to exchange ideas. The prototype under-floor grain drying bins still standing at the farm were built by Jeff.

The WEA classes in the village, especially the Greek Philosophy course led by the redoubtable Miss Cameron, were a great influence on him. Woodcarving interested him and pottery at Pendley with Murray Fieldhouse, and he taught at evening classes for a time. Naturally he built his own wheel and kiln.

I first met him in 1950 when a Young Farmers Club went for a walk around Pitstone Green, and then at WEA meetings and farmers' talks, where he took pages and pages of notes. When I was asked to form a YFC in Ivinghoe, I asked Jeff if he would help me and together for many years we ran a most unusual YFC but we won the Efficiency Cup and many awards, with kids, very few of whom had agricultural backgrounds. We raised money by growing vegetables where Windmill Close now stands and carted the members all over the place. Teenagers did not have their own transport then.

The YFC decided they were interested in Local History and with John Allereton as Chairman, formed a group to investigate the making of a parish. The first constitution said that one person over 25 should hold office, which Chris Gowing, the curator of Aylesbury Museum, thought a bit odd! The Young Farmers went out into the world and we took over. Can't remember if Jeff or Tom Owen was Chairman but Keith Saunders was Secretary.

On a WEA outing to London, Jeff first mentioned that he was thinking of forming a group to restore the windmill, which will be a lasting memorial and led to involvement with Lacey Green and Quainton mills. Then we acquired a lease of the watermill as well. David Wray and David Goseltine joined us. The Manshead Society of Dunstable, who had been excavating in the quarry, gave up there and we rescued what remained before it was

crushed into cement. At the same time Jeff still had to work the farm and he decided to try to reclaim Quarry 1 which people said could not be done. Now it is to be factories but for many years it grew good barley crops. Farming and the countryside was changing very rapidly and so much was being destroyed or thrown out and so we decided we must save what we could and we used the loft at Vicarage Farm as a store. David Wray wanted to hold a show at Little Gaddesden which was very successful and the BAS asked us to put on a display for them. Jeff's pigs had gone, the loose boxes and Big Barn were empty and we took them over. We were quite overwhelmed by the quantity of material we were collecting.

Hugh Baddley asked us to help him make a film and 'The Agrarian Revolution' was made. We also attended WEA classes on local history for many years. The threat from developers in the countryside was increasing and Jeff played a leading role in the formation of the Chiltern Society and the Beacon Villages Society. He said he would shave off his beard if the Cement Works ever went and to his surprise he had to, but it grew again because so few people recognised him without it. The Battle of the Tips was won. Pitstone church was made redundant and so we formed a committee to open it on Sunday afternoons and to look after the interior. Chairman Jeff: Secretary Keith Saunders. Jeff was Chairman of the parish council for many years and President of the Cricket Club. He also provided storage for the club tractor and mowing machine, trestles for the Horticultural Society, props for the Dramatics. Wanting the museum, which the Curator of the Reading Museum of Rural Life said was one of the most important collections in the country, to continue, he offered the buildings as a gift to the Society. They were unable to accept and so Bob Morgan hammered out a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent. Now we must try to carry it on as he would have wished.