

Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

NEWSLETTER – Spring 2016

The Society in 2015: the Hon Secretary's Report.

BAS Council Meetings were held on 6th January, 7th March, 6th June, and 10th October.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 9th May.

Officers. Graham Parker did not stand for re-election as Honorary Treasurer, though he continued to serve as Acting Treasurer until the end of the year. He has held this post for three years and has served with the devotion, energy, and efficiency that he has earned the gratitude of the Society. At the time of the writing of this report early in 2016, Harry Ball had agreed to take up the position of Acting Treasurer and will hopefully be elected at the spring at the AGM as Honorary Treasurer. Michael Ghirelli did not stand for re-election as Honorary Secretary. It had been hoped that a new Hon Secretary would be elected at the 2015 AGM, but unfortunately this did not happen, so the position continues to be vacant at the time of writing this report, and the position is to be advertised in the spring edition of the Newsletter.

Councillors. Roger Bettridge, Sarah Gray, and Eliza Alqassar were elected as new members of Council, while Yvonne Edwards, Julian Hunt, and Michael Ghirelli reached the end of their three year terms as councillors. However, Julian Hunt in his capacity as organiser of the lecture programme, and Michael Ghirelli the editor of The Newsletter will both continue to sit on Council as co-opted members.

Finance and Membership. Graham Parker the Honorary Treasurer reported the Society was in a healthy financial position. The late Professor Bill Mead, the former President of BAS has generously bequeathed to the Society the sum of £5,000. Consideration is being given to proposing an appropriate use of this sum that might stand as a worthy memorial to him. He also assigned various rights in his publications to the Society. Bronwen Lee the Hon Membership Secretary reports that total membership increased over the year to December 2015 from 417 to 425. There remains some confusion about membership rates that had been raised in 2013: some members are still paying at the old rate.

HS2: Heritage on the Line. The proposed high speed rail link initially between London and Birmingham will run the length of the county from south to north and will inevitably have a profound impact on the historic landscape, the natural environment, and the archaeological and architectural heritage of Bucks. BAS organised a one day conference at Weston Turville village hall On Saturday May 16th with the objective of discussing the losses and gains resulting from the development of this project. Ten speakers covered a wide variety of topics and considered both the advantages for archaeological research – for example the new knowledge gained from excavations in advance of the construction process – and the possible devastation and destruction of important sites. It has to be

said that, to this writer's knowledge, no other county archaeological and historical society along the route of the line has shown such interest in and awareness of the likely impact of HS2.

Planning Matters. Increasingly since the beginning of the twentieth century our county's valued and cherished landscape has been subject to the increasing suburbanisation as population and commerce spread out across the Chilterns and into the Vale of Aylesbury. The Society has been vigilant in ensuring that in any development, the various district council planning authorities are aware of any listed buildings or sensitive archaeological sites that may be threatened by development. It was disappointing that the local plan proposed by Aylesbury Vale District Council had been rejected; happily, a new plan is in the process of creation. Nigel Wilson, a member of BAS Council, has asked AVDC what might be the landscape policy in the plan; unfortunately, BAS is currently unable to comment until the plan becomes available. At present, when a site is considered for development, assessments are being made on a site by site basis at the planning officer level. It is perhaps worth noting that English Heritage requested a higher level of assessment of those sites that are of particular scientific, historic or archaeological interest.

BAS and the County Museum. Over the year, the Society represented by Peter Marsden and Mike Farley has been involved in lengthy negotiations with Buckinghamshire County Council over the over the covenant in the lease agreement that requires the building to be used as a museum. The greater part of the building is owned by BAS, but Bucks CC have wanted the covenant removed, opening up the possibility of greater use of the building for commercial purposes. The Society is insistent that the covenant be retained. However, the Museum Trust set up by the County Council and responsible now for the running of the County Museum has been sympathetic with the Society's position and are keen that the matter be resolved. They are themselves under pressure from the County Council, but do need the Society's support, for some sixty percent of the actual collection is owned by the Society. By the end of the year, there had been no resolution of the issue.

Lectures. Julian Hunt arranged a full programme of lectures over the year. Speakers and topics included Richard de Peyer on the Wycombe Story; Mike Farley on Buckinghamshire pots and potters; Michael Ghirelli on the population of Buckinghamshire 1086-1801; Susan Sorek's talk dealt with Lenborough and the discovery of the coin hoard, while Max Hunt lectured on the life of Herbert Austin. Of special interest was the visit to the County Museum on May 11th by Dr Gareth Williams, Curator of Early Mediaeval Coinage at the British Museum, when he gave a talk on the hoard of Anglo Saxon coins unearthed at Lenborough late in 2014.

Bucks Local History Network. David Thorpe wisely made the happy choice of the Oculus in Aylesbury as the venue for the 2015 conference held on September 26th. The county town is conveniently central to our long narrow county and accessible both from both north and south Bucks. *Buckinghamshire Towns* was the theme of the day. Julian Hunt spoke on Wycombe and Chesham, Dr David Lewis on Windsor and Eton, and Prof David Lock on the development of Milton Keynes. Dr Thorpe himself brought his knowledge of Subtopia nad pre Metro-land suburban development in Bucks before the Great War, and the eminent Prof Chris Dyer spoke on the mediaeval town in Bucks.

The Active Archaeology Group lived up to its name by being very active in a number of endeavours both within the county and beyond its borders. Survey work continues at Hogshaw, Hobbs Hill, and Cholesbury; the group has been involved in digging test pits at Wing, and has worked on the Hillforts survey. Other locations in which members have worked include Whelpley Hill, Saint Albans/Verulamium, Hockliffe, the Chess Valley, and the gardens at Stowe. Over winter, the group held a series of very well attended winter talks in the County Museum. The AAG provides an opportunity for anyone interested in doing practical archaeology to get some hands on experience, and new members would be welcome.

Excursions. George Lamb, organised the programme of summer outings. Julian Hunt took a group to Colnbrook in the south of the county, Diana and Peter Gullands visited Burford and Northleach. George himself had planned an outing to Upton in Warwickshire; unfortunately, he was still suffering the effects of a road accident and so was unable to lead the outing. However, the excursion did go ahead nevertheless. Finally, with his accustomed enthusiasm and expertise, Michael Hardy led the Church Crawl to west Bucks where it borders on Oxfordshire, visiting churches at Aston Sandford, Kingsy, Towersey, Chinnor, Bledlow Ridge, Saunderton, Horsenden, and Great Kimble.

Festival of Archaeology. Braving a gusty wind, a group from BAS including Nigel Wilson, Bron Lee, Kate Davis, Terry Bloxham and Kim Biddulph, manned a stall at Aylesbury Town Centre on 18th July. They opened up around 9.45 and began to pack up at 3.30, and aroused considerable interest, being at times swamped with people. Plenty of BAS membership application forms as well as promotional leaflets for the Museum were distributed, though fewer books and copies of Records of Bucks were sold. .

The Library and Archives. Marian Miller, Honorary Librarian and Archivist, presides over the library and archive collection, leading a team of volunteers who catalogue and sort the documents and tomes stored in the muniment room and the library, and ensuring this wealth of material is available to visiting researchers. This past year, an appointment system has been introduced to make the operation of the library and archives more efficient, while the sale or donation of surplus stock and duplicate volumes has made room in the restricted space of the muniment room. Special mention should be given to Jeremy Howarth and Mel Czapski who have been making a selection from the Society's collection of prints in readiness for a talk and exhibition of in the Museum.

Records of Bucks. John Broad and Bob Zeepvat were responsible for ensuring that the Society's annual publication *Records of Buckinghamshire* maintained the highest standards of scholarship. The 2015 edition included papers on a variety of subjects, with dates ranging from prehistoric and pre-Roman through to the late Victorian and Great War era. On-line Records of Bucks, where John Dodd's work with a commercial IT company has speeded up the scanning of back volumes enormously. Six more volumes went on-line in 2015 – for the years 1859, 1930 and 1971-74, bringing the total to 29 on-line volumes.

Deceased Members. We have been informed of the deaths of the following members: Mr R M Allison, Mr A Boarder, Mr A R Bridbury, Mr D Collins, Mr J T Shipley, Mr & Mrs R F H Martin, Dr & Mrs P G Roads. In addition, we have heard the sad news that Lorna Head, who had been the BAS Honorary Librarian and Archivist died peacefully on 21st December, her 95th birthday. A full obituary will appear in the forthcoming edition of Records of Bucks.

Michael Ghirelli
Formerly Hon. Secretary to May 2015.