

Buckinghamshire Local History Network

The 2015 BLHN conference was held at the Oculus at Aylesbury Vale District Council offices in Gatehouse road, Aylesbury. This choice of venues was a welcome innovation, for in the past, it had generally been into south Bucks that attendees would travel, many of us from those more distant places such as Buckingham, Olney, and Milton Keynes; last year, Buckingham with its limited public transport access and far from Chiltern Bucks had been the venue. The county town is centrally located in our long narrow shire, and easily accessed, and therefore proved to be a popular place for holding the conference. As for the building itself – the Oculus is a comfortable and well equipped lecture hall, while the Street Exhibition Space provides ample space for the various society displays, and luncheons and other refreshments are available.

The theme of the lecture programme was *Buckingham Towns*. Originally, David Green was to talk on Wycombe before the industrial revolution and the development of the furniture industry, but technical problems meant he was unable to deliver what promised to be a most interesting talk, so Julian Hunt magnificently stepped into the breach at short notice with a comparison of the development of Wycombe and Chesham. Dr David Lewis used original documents and the Historic Towns Trust Atlasw to give the audience useful insights into the development of on Windsor and Eton, and Prof David Lock on the development of Milton Keynes looked at the utopian origins of Milton Keynes and recalled the energy and excitement of the new city. It was probably a revelation to the audience that in the original proposals, a monorail system had been included – one wonders whatever had happened to that scheme. Dr Thorpe himself spoke of the movement out of London of the super-rich plutocrats who moved out into Bucks following the extension into the county of the Metropolitan Railway in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods; he showed a fascinating series of photographs taken showing the opulent housing that was erected in those years across the landscape of our county. Finally, the afternoon was rounded off by an inevitably interesting and authoritative talk from Prof Christopher Dyer on mediaeval towns in Buckinghamshire, illustrated by a valuable series of statistics, tables and maps.

Michael Ghirelli