

THE SOCIETY

Membership

At the beginning of 1990, there were 341 ordinary members, 120 family memberships, one junior and 12 affiliated societies.

Council

Council met five times. Dr Arnold Baines, FSA was re-elected chairman. Ted Bull was co-opted as Hon. Meetings Organiser and Newsletter Editor. Council expressed its thanks and appreciation of the many years of friendly co-operation with Mrs Elizabeth Arkell (Chairman, Library & Museum Sub-committee) and Mrs F. Shand-Kydd as County Council representatives and, later, welcomed their successors, Mrs Audrey Moore (now Chairman, Library & Museum Sub-committees) and John Gates.

Bucks County Council

Library & Museum Sub-Committee

Society representatives were Elliott Viney, Dr Arnold Baines and Dr Bob Hagerty.

The move of the contents of the County Museum to what was Halton Middle School was

completed in January 1990. The Aylesbury and Exhibition Galleries remain open with entry from St Mary's Square. The Society's medieval documents and the manuscript collection have been transferred to the County Record Office, while the remainder of the Society library will go to Halton. The school will not be open to the public, except by individual appointment, but members will have access to the Society library on Wednesdays and to the meeting room for Saturday meetings.

County Council decision as to what work will be carried out to repair, refurbish and possibly extend the County Museum will be taken when the results of the County Architect's survey, proposals and costings, are available.

Meanwhile, the Sub-Committee's Museum Panel is studying recommendations as to the future development of the County Museums Service and the County Museum made by the Area Museums Service for South East England and by the County Museums Officer.

Discussions are taking place between the

Milton Keynes Development Corporation, the Milton Keynes Borough Council and the County Council, regarding provision of a museum and art gallery in Milton Keynes.

Cicely Baker Price 1987/8

Four entries were received. The £50 prize was awarded to Mr B.H. Butler of Marlow for an essay entitled 'The Marlow Tithes. The Tithe Commutation Act 1836 and the Rectory of Great Marlow', published in this volume.

Lecture Series

The first three talks were in the County Museum and the remainder at the new location at Halton Middle School.

- 7 *January*: Miss Mary Bosdet gave an illustrated talk on Buckinghamshire Patron Saints covering the dedications of churches in the county.
- 4 *February*: Mike Farley talked, with slides, on Down Among the Dead Men – an archaeologist's view of burial and beliefs in Bucks.
- 4 *March*: Elliott Viney described, with illustrations, the heraldry of the county and the Bohun Swan.
- 18 *November*: Julian Hunt gave a talk, accompanied by slides, on Wilmslow, the Making of a Town.

Outings

Five outings were arranged by the President. All enjoyed good weather.

- 3 *June*: Derbyshire, Notts. Chatsworth (Duke of Devonshire). Southwell Minster.
- 15 *July*: Hampshire. Beaulieu House and Abbey (Lord Montagu). Breamore House (Sir Westrow Hulse).
- 12 *August*: Gloucestershire. Chedworth Roman Villa (National Trust). Gloucester Cathedral, etc. Fairford Church.
- 23 *September*: East Anglia. Audley End House (English Heritage). Melford House (National Trust).
- 11 *November*: Bucks Church Crawl. Newton Longville. Great Linford. Gayhurst. Lathbury. Fenny Stratford, Bletchley. At Fenny Stratford, the party assisted at the traditional

St Martin's Day firing of the 'poppers', instituted by Browne Willis about 1730 to mark each anniversary of the deaths, both on St Martin's Day, in 1675 of his grandfather, Dr Thomas Willis, a famous physician who lived in St Martin's Lane in the parish of St Martin's-in-the-Fields and was buried in Westminster Abbey and, in 1699, of his father, also Thomas.

Environmental

As usual, dealing with Listed Building planning applications has been a noticeable burden on the Hon. Secretary. During the year some 140 such applications were processed and comment made on 20 including definite objection to one series of applications affecting the same house. A few of the more interesting have been mentioned in the Newsletters.

County Museum Archaeological Group

With the dislodgement from 'the County Museum', the regular Tuesday meetings ceased after March. A programme of winter field-walking was undertaken so far as weather permitted. An excavation was completed in Chesham on a site which yielded mesolithic and neolithic material. Late funding by HBMCL limited investigation on the line of the M40 in the county to a couple of weeks during which Romano-British ditches were located near the Arngrove Farms in Boarstall. Following discovery by metal detector, a dig at Chalfont St Peter resulted in the unearthing of four spherical pots containing some 5,000 late third-century radiate coins. Exploratory excavation near Stone Hospital failed to uncover the hoped-for traces of Romano-British or other occupation.

Publications

Records of Buckinghamshire Volume 29 (1987) was distributed in April. In addition to thanking all those who helped in the distribution, we must thank the Museum attendants who undertook the task of pasting in the envelopes containing the dreaded fiches. As usual, Spring and Autumn Newsletters were sent to members.

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

The Section had a more extensive programme than usual, thanks to embarking on a new venture to include items of geological interest. Our committee meetings have been held at the home of Mrs O. Bradburn and we are grateful to her for her continued hospitality. A note of the year's programme is given below:

14 January: Mrs Beryl Hulbert gave a relaxed but informed talk on the geology, plants and wildlife of five national parks from Phoenix to San Francisco. Forty-five members attended.

11 February: Thirteen people spent a day bird watching at the ARC Wildlife Centre, Great Linford. This is a remarkable example of industry and a conservation organization working together to create a productive new habitat for wildlife on the new wetlands made by gravel extraction. The reserve now supports a large breeding waterfowl community and attracts a great many wintering ducks.

11 March: Kim Kemp gave a lively talk on the fossils and geology of the Chilterns. An interesting collection of fossils was handed round. Forty-seven members were in attendance.

8 April: Following the AGM, Dr Ian Toplis gave a detailed talk illustrated with slides on 'How Buckinghamshire Geology has affected its Buildings'. The meeting was well attended with forty present.

17 May: After a spell of unsettled weather a group of us were fortunate in having a perfect evening to watch three badgers at their sett. In the distance the calls of both the Little and Tawny Owls were heard.

10 June: A dozen members were shown round Pitstone Fen and College Lake. Both Graham Atkins, the warden, and his assistant, Gary Roberts, gave up a great deal of their time to explain how they managed the hundred acre site. The main features included a lake with large islands, shingle beaches and floating nest rafts.

22 July: The conservation aspects of farming were highlighted in our visit to Marston Fields

Farm. In temperatures of 90° Mr Robinson showed us his native tree plantation and a wild flower meadow which contained such species as Great Burnett, Self-heal, White Clover and Tufted Vetch. The heat suited the butterflies and we saw Common Blues and Small Coppers. Greater Spearwort, Water Mint and Water Soldier were established in some of the many ponds on the farm. We were told that ornithological interest on the farm included a Barn Owl breeding experiment, Tawny and Little Owls, Duck, Moorhen and Yellow Wagtails, and that there was an abundance of Quail and Curlew. Our gratitude goes to Mr and Mrs John Robinson whose warmth and hospitality were very much appreciated.

30 September: Twenty-six people joined Dr Eric Robinson on his geological walk round Aylesbury. We learnt that Portland Stone was brought to the town via the canal, and that it was considered the best building stone, perhaps that is why it was used in the construction of the County Court and St Mary's Church. The Church path was of sarsons and its gateway of red bricks made from Hartwell clay. Temple Street sets were of Leicestershire granite and the kerbs blue dolerite from Staffordshire. Dr Robinson showed us that even our modern concrete buildings in Friars' Square have special interest, as local flints and gravels had been used as a filler. In the Market Square our attention was drawn to the favoured stone frontages of various businesses. The Banks were built of either gritstone or white limestone, the Building Societies chose granite façades, whilst the shops preferred marble or larvikite. This was an exceptionally successful event in our programme.

14 October: The fungus foray in Burnham Beeches proved fruitful. Amongst the thirty or so species found were some for which the Beeches are noted such as *Ganoderma applanatum*, whilst the Druid's Oak provided us with fine specimens of *Fistulina hepatica*. Other fungi collected were: *Ganoderma*

adpersum, *Amanita muscaria*, *Amanita phalloides*, *Piptoporus betulinus*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Amanita rubescens*, *Laccaria amethystea*, *Lactarius subdulcis*, *Lactarius turpis*, *Oudemansiella mucida*, *Lycoperdon pyriforme*, *Stereum rugosum*, *Mycena filipes*, *Coriolus versicolor*, *Bulgaria inquinans*, *Leccinum versipelle*, *Crepidotus variabilis*, *Collybia maculata*, *Paxillus involutus*,

11 November: In Chris Smith's talk on Farming and Wildlife we learnt that conservation on a farm is possible without impairing the efficiency of farming operations. The content of the talk and standard of delivery was very high. It was disappointing that only a dozen people attended this talk on a subject of current importance to us all.

2 December: Western Anatolia was the subject of a talk by Victor Scott. The archaeological sites visited proved to be excellent for flowers. Victor was able to interest us with his superb collection of slides and we are very grateful to him for providing another excellent afternoon on the natural history of an area that has only recently been opened up to tourists.

9 December: Dr Chris Green's lecture on Pleistocene Geology at Marsworth (Pitstone) was an extremely informative and comprehensive description of a unique site. This is one

of the most exciting Quaternary sites to have been discovered in the last twenty years in Britain as evidence has been found of a new interglacial in the Riss glaciation complex, with a very rich assemblage of plant and animal remains. Of particular interest were Mammoth remains, a huge tusk, and the jaw of a large lion. We are indebted to Dr Green for a lecture of outstanding calibre.

Margaret Kendrick

Geological Field Trips

Two outdoor meetings were arranged. The first, at Totternhoe lime quarry in July, allowed members to explore the deep channel deposit of 'Totternhoe Stone' with its fossil-rich bed, cutting through the lower chalk. In August there was an excursion to Blockley Brickworks in Gloucestershire, where fossiliferous Lower Lias clay yielded many specimens. Both these meetings were well attended with 15–20 members and guests. The Society is grateful to Dr Michael Oates for his guidance and encouragement in leading both these meetings. As a result of the higher profile given to geology in its programme of events, the Society has gained a number of new members, boding well for the organization of similar meetings in the future.

Kate Rowland

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

(as at 31 December 1989)

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Hon. Secretary, Natural History Section

MRS JOAN TAYLOR

The Society's representatives on the County Library and Museums Sub-Committee

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