

THE SOCIETY

Membership

The Society learnt with regret of the deaths of Miss D. J. Adams, Mr R. G. Alexander, Miss D. M. Harris, Mrs M. Kessler, Mrs V. D. James, and Mr J. F. Warren.

At the beginning of 1991, there were 335 ordinary members, 109 family memberships, no junior, and 12 affiliated societies. Counting a family membership as 2 members, there has been an apparent fall in total membership of nearly 5% in each of the four past years.

Council

Council met five times. Dr Arnold Baines FSA was re-elected chairman. Ted Bull was co-opted as Hon. Meetings Organizer and Newsletter Editor. Alan Dell was later co-opted.

Bucks County Council

Library & Museum Sub-Committee

Society representatives were the President, Dr Baines, and Dr Hagerty, the two former serving also on the Museum Panel.

Stripping to determine the structural condition of the Church Street Museum buildings has laid bare evidence of their origins. Studies on site by John Chenevix Trench FSA and Mrs Pauline Fenley FSA, with the co-operation of Roger Evans (County Historic Buildings Officer) and English Heritage, have shown that Ceely House originated in the mid fifteenth century, probably as the premises of the Guild of the Virgin Mary.

The County Council will be undertaking refurbishment in accordance with the lease during the next three years at a revenue cost of £1.3m. Work necessary to comply with current regulations for museum use will entail capital

expenditure of £600,000. Construction of a first-floor in-fill to provide an enlarged art gallery (estimated cost £730,000) must depend on private funding which it is hoped to raise by an appeal.

The County Council has agreed to augment the Museum staff by new posts: Head of Resources, Keeper of Documentation, and Keeper of Social History (splitting the post of Keeper of History and Archaeology). The County Field Archaeologist becomes the County Archaeologist but creation of the recommended post of Field Archaeologist was postponed.

The Museum Panel has recommended *inter alia* that, in view of the projected demise of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in 1992, meaning cessation of its funding of the MK Archaeology Unit, a review should be undertaken urgently of archaeological provision for the county.

Lecture Series

Five talks, usually with slides, were held on Saturday afternoons in the Technical Centre, Halton.

13 January: Mike Farley sketched an archaeological view of transport by wheels and water.

24 February: Elliott Viney revived the glories of two great Bucks houses, Chequers and Hartwell.

24 March: Mrs D. Wright recounted the story of lace.

17 November: Bob Williams of the MK Archaeology Unit described the evidence of Saxon settlement, archaeologically so elusive nationally, as seen in the Milton Keynes area.

1 December: Elliott Viney recalled two dissimilar Bucks characters well-known in their times, John Schorne and John Wilkes.

Outings

Five outings were arranged by the President, of which one had to be cancelled for lack of support. All enjoyed good weather.

9 June: Worcs & Gloucs. Little Malvern Court, gardens and priory (Mrs T. Barrington), Tewkesbury Abbey, Deerhurst church and Odda's chapel.

14 July: Northants. Lamport Hall, Naseby battlefield and museum, Stanford-on-Avon church and hall (Lady Braye).

11 August: War. Warwick town, church, Leicester Hospital and castle. Charlecote house, church and park (NT).

19 September: Somerset. Wells & Glastonbury. Cancelled.

13 October: Bucks Church Crawl. Whitchurch, Dunton, Addington, Buckingham, Stowe, Chetwode, North Marston (to mark the 700th anniversary year of Master John Schorne).

County Museum Archaeological Group

Archaeological activities, outside Milton Keynes, have continued to be compromised by lack of staff as well as of funding. Despite the pressure on the County archaeologist, Mike Farley, he has continued to organize occasional meetings of the Group in the Technical Centre. Field walking has continued. A few exploratory investigations of threatened sites have been undertaken.

Environmental

The Society was represented by Dr Baines at

the local public inquiry into the Aylesbury Local Plan. The Society's plea for a statement of AVDC policy towards archaeology more in line with English Heritage guidelines met with limited success.

Planning applications have continued to flood in. However, following the Hon. Secretary's accident in January, he has not been able to be so active in dealing with these. Society policy is to concern itself with applications affecting Listed Buildings and conservation Areas and, in co-operation with the County Archaeologist, in sites of known or potential archaeological interest. We do not have the resources to involve ourselves in applications mainly affecting the wider environment which must be left to the appropriate bodies, national and local.

Publications

Records of Buckinghamshire Vol. 30 (1988) was distributed in January. In addition to thanking the Museum attendants who pasted in the fiches, the Society wishes to thank all those who helped Mrs Hagerty in the distribution. As usual, Spring and Autumn Newsletters were sent to members.

We record here, with our thanks, the generous gift of £2,800 presented by Mr R. J. M. Frost of R. Raphael & Sons plc of Walton Lodge towards publication in *Records* Vol. 31 of the report of the MSC excavations at Walton directed by Hal Dalwood.

Society Monograph No. 2, *Roman and Belgic Pottery from Excavations in Milton Keynes 1972-82*, by P. T. Marney, was published in February. Sales are handled by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit.

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

The Section had an active and instructive 1990.

20 January: Dr Michael Oates talked to an appreciative audience of a visit he made to

Spitzbergen to look at the geology and natural history of that northern land. Dr Oates illustrated the talk with slides and had brought along a number of specimens for examination.

17 February: Members bird-watched at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes. David Price, the Park Ranger, explained that the site had originally been old water meadows but its purpose now is to act as a balancing lake and is a site of national standing; 203 species have been recorded. One and a half million birds used the lake as a roost. A Water Pipit was in residence. Our species list included Greylag and Canada Goose, Mallard, Coot, Swan, Appleby Silvers, Mediterranean Gull, Pied Wagtail, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Pochard, Shoveller, Wigeon, Shelduck, Herring Gull, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great Crested and Slavonian Grebe.

17 March: Members listened to Kate Rowland give a fascinating account of the lives of a variety of species of British spiders.

7 April: Following the Annual General Meeting of the Section, Aubrey Woodward delighted us with excellent slides on a wide variety of subjects, all of which had been taken in the Aylesbury locality.

26 May: John Hazell took us on a tour of Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, and explained the management plan for the fifteen acres of semi-natural woodland.

23 June: Nigel Phillips gave up two-and-a-half hours to show us round the Warburg reserve. Apart from explaining the various types of management in progress in different parts of the reserve, we were treated to an individually tailored tour to look at plants of special interest to us.

7 July: An informative afternoon was spent looking at grasses in Pilch field, Singleborough, with Roy Maycock, identifying some thirty species.

15 September: Although the final count of the species list was very small, members spent an enjoyable afternoon canal dipping at Ivinghoe Bridge.

6 October: We suffered a deluge on Victor Scott's fungus foray at Stockgrove Park. The

season had been very dry, not particularly good for fungus, but the discovery of a troop of the rare *Tricholoma leucocephalum* rounded off the foray most satisfactorily.

10 November: The illustrated talk on Madagascar given by Geoff Beck was received very well by an appreciative audience.

8 December: Andrew Cleave made his way from Basingstoke through blizzards to give us an entertaining and informative illustrated talk on Grasshoppers and Crickets.

Margaret Kendrick

Report of the Hon. Recording Secretary

1990 started with long spells of mild windy weather, with very little frost; this brought spring flowers out early.

Spring migrants among the birds showed a further decline in numbers. In the area immediately west of Aylesbury very few chiff-chaffs or willow warblers, garden warblers or black-caps were seen or heard. No adverse change has taken place in the environment; in fact more small coppices have been planted in recent years; so the reason for the decline must be sought elsewhere.

The warm spring was followed by a very hot dry summer. Butterflies did well, Holly Blues in particular. Colonies of Black Hairstreaks were well up in numbers; some new ones, not previously recorded, are doing well.

Moth populations are still declining, possibly as a result of more and brighter lights being used nowadays, especially fluorescents.

It was a bumper year for the fruits of trees and shrubs in hedges and gardens, reviving the old question of whether this presaged a long hard winter.

A buzzard was seen a number of times along the Thame valley near Stone.

I would be most grateful for details of sightings of flora and fauna to report in these notes.

A. T. Woodward

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(as at 31 December 1990)

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The Society's representatives on the County Library and Museums Sub-Committee
ELLIOTT VINEY, FSA DR A. H. J. BAINES, FSA DR R. P. HAGERTY

Headquarters

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