

THE SOCIETY

2010

The most notable Society event of 2010 was the launch of the book “An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire”, edited by Mike Farley, with contributions from a number of eminent local archaeologists. The book launch coincided with an exhibition at the County Museum entitled “Human” which traced the history of the county from its earliest origins through to the Roman period, and which featured many wonderful artefacts and displays. Both the exhibition and the book were well received, and book sales have been good.

The Historic Buildings’ Group continued its work on a number of projects, including the development of methodology for recording extant public houses, detailed surveys of houses in Hedgerley and work on historic properties in Wingrave, in conjunction with village residents. This latter project attracted a grant from the Council for British Archaeology, which was used to run a study day in October, at which samples were taken for dendrochronological dating of three houses. Earlier in the year, in May, another very successful study day was held on the subject of maps and their use in historic buildings’ research. The Wingrave project will continue into 2011, along with further work on the development of a user-friendly historic buildings’ survey guide.

During 2010, the Society was able to make two donations to very worthy causes. £1000 was given to the County Museum, towards the purchase of a fourth-century coin hoard found at Cold Brayfield. The Aylesbury Young Archaeologists’ Club was the grateful recipient of £100, which helped to fund the coach hire for their outing to Piddington Roman museum.

Bringing us right into the 21st century, Peter Marsden has been working hard on a project to digitise back copies of *Records of Buckinghamshire* for the Society’s website. The aim is to make back issues available to read on-line and to download in facsimile form. Volume 11, parts 1 to 6, went live in October 2010, with volume 17 waiting in the wings for 2011. This is a labour

intensive project, which will take some time to complete, but it is vital that the Society moves forward in this digital age, and makes the most of its excellent website, which is currently maintained by Kevin Quick and Peter Marsden.

This year’s Buckinghamshire Local History Network Conference in October took for its theme “Some Great Buckinghamshire Houses and their Owners”, with presentations on Nether Winchendon House, Cliveden, Chilton and Ashridge, amongst others. Once again, this well-organised event attracted a large number of participants and was a great success. The Society was also represented at the Buckinghamshire Family History Society Open Day and the Festival of Archaeology Day at the County Museum.

Four council meetings were held during the year: January 16th, March 20th, June 16th and October 23rd, with the AGM being held on 15th May 2010. An extraordinary meeting was held on December 4th to discuss proposals for the future of the Museum Service in the light of the Buckinghamshire County Council spending review. Mike Farley was elected to the role of Chair of Council at the June meeting.

At the Annual General Meeting in May, a minute’s silence was held in memory of Dr Ian Toplis. Ian will be sorely missed by his many friends and colleagues within the Society. He contributed much to our knowledge of the history of the county, in particular through his work on the architects George Gilbert Scott and Sir Albert Richardson. He also undertook to review and comment upon many planning applications on behalf of the Society.

Two new appointments were made to Council at the AGM, to replace Dr Yvonne Edwards and Kevin Quick, whose terms of office were complete; Nick Crank, archaeological officer from Milton Keynes, and Nigel Wilson. Thanks were extended to all those who had served Council so well during the year.

2010 ended with a number of challenges which will undoubtedly influence the future for archae-

ology and heritage in Buckinghamshire, not least of which are HS2 and the County Council spending review. Whatever 2011 may bring, it seems certain that Societies such as ours will have an even greater role to play in helping to preserve our past and ensure that future generations understand and are

able to enjoy our rich heritage. There will an increasing number of opportunities for Society members to be actively involved in such work and it is surely incumbent upon us to use our time, talents and energy to this end, as have so many of our predecessors.

Lectures 2010

2 January	Coleshill: Julian Hunt
6 February	Living and Dying in Iron Age Buckinghamshire: Mike Farley
6 March	19 th century Buckinghamshire from its newspapers: Tony Plimer and Nick Yarrow (The Windsor and Eton Gazette project)
6 November	The Records of the Medieval Manor Court of Winslow: David Noy
4 December	Chesham Bois House: Dr Yvonne Edwards

Outings 2010

5 June	Tour of Winslow led by Julian Hunt
10 July	Minster Lovell and Chastleton led by George Lamb
7 August	Nether Winchendon and Whitchurch led by Peter and Diana Gulland
18 September	Church crawl led by Michael Hardy

Sue Fox, Honorary Secretary

THE LIBRARY

ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE 2010

1. Books

- AINSWORTH, S. and others. Understanding the archaeology of landscapes: a guide to good recording practice. 2007.
- ALLEN, T. and others. From Bronze Age enclosure to Anglo-Saxon settlement: archaeological excavations at Taplow hillfort, 1999–2005. 2009.
- BERRY, H.A. Growing up in High Wycombe: chairmaking and the stamp factory. 2008.
- BIRTCHNELL, P. Bygone Berkhamsted. Repr. 1988.
- BONWICK, L. Brill windmill. The history, technology, conservation and repair of a 17th century post mill. 2010.
- BRITAIN-CATLIN, T. English parsonage in early 19th century. [Includes Bucks examples]. 2008.
- CLARKE, C. & FLETCHER, K. The Fuller family: Germaines and Hyde House. 2010.
- COBB, Rev. J. History and antiquities of Berkhamsted. Repr. 1988.
- COX, M. The Manor House, Weston Turville. 2010.
- DARVILL, T. Concise dictionary of archaeology. 2nd ed. 2008.
- DAY, M. Henrietta Ward: a Victorian artist in Slough. 2006.
- DYER, C. & JONES, R. Deserted villages revisited. 2010.
- EYRES, P. editor. Grenville landscape of Wotton House. 2009.
- FARLEY, M. editor. Illustrated history of early Buckinghamshire. 2010.
- FLETCHER, K. The Chesham co-operators: a brief history of the Co-operative Movement in Chesham and surrounding area. 2010.
- GREEN, D. The making of the Chilterns landscape: Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project. 2010.
- GREEN, M. William Penn and Quaker links with Penn parish. 2009.
- GUINNESS, E. Fulmer's fallen: the story of Fulmer's lost sons from both World Wars. 2009.
- HYMAN, C. Portrait of a shoot. [Hambleden Valley]. 2010.
- JENKINS, S. editor. Bugle & sabre III: military history in Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire. [Includes articles on Remnantz House, Marlow and notes on the Home Guard]. 2009.
- JONES, H. The Chiltern Railways story. 2010.
- KORZINCK, M. editor. The Beacon: celebrating 75 years of life at The Beacon [School] 1933–2008. [Chesham Bois]. 2009.
- LONG, R. Curious Buckinghamshire. 2010.
- MORRIS, J. Cultural heritage of Chiltern woods: an illustrated guide to archaeological features. 2009.
- MOSLEY, J. The printing office of John Wilkes in Great George Street, 1763. From: The Private Library, Volume 1(4): Winter 2008.
- ONYEANA, D. Nigger at Eton. [An account of life at Eton College in the 1960s]. 1972.
- PETTRIGREW, I. & AUSTIN, W. Gone with the wind. Windmills and those around Tring. [Includes many from Bucks.] 2010.
- PHILIP, P. Four pubs and two duck ponds. Lane End: the birth and growth of a Chiltern village. 2001.
- REES, B. Stowe: a history of the public school 1923–1989. 2008.
- REES, N. A Royal exile: King Zog of Albania. 2010.
- ROTHSCHILD ARCHIVE REVIEW OF THE YEAR, April 2008–March 2009. 2010.
- SEWELL, E. Long Crendon. Historical Miscellany 2. 2010.
- SHARP, S. editor. Haddenham chronicles No.8, 2010.
- SMITH, R. Langley: a glimpse of the past. The parish of Langley Marish 1894–1907. 1994.
- SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT COUNCIL. Farnham Royal Conservation Area, designated 19 January 2010.
- STRANGE, W.A. Haddenham and Cuddington: the early history of two Buckinghamshire villages. Bucks paper No.11, 2007
- WALLEN, M. ed. Buckinghamshire Bird Report 2009.
- WEST, B. Wolverton works in camera 1838–1993. 1993.

2. Map

British Geological Survey: 1:50,000 Series England and Wales Sheet 220 Leighton Buzzard solid and drift geology. Covering Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Newton Longville, Great Brickhill, Stewkley, Cublington, Wing. 1992.

3. Acts of Parliament

An Act for the taking down and rebuilding certain parts of North Bridge and Tickford Bridge in the parishes of Newport Pagnell and Lathbury in the county of Buckingham; and for widening and making more commodious the said bridges, and the approaches thereto. 1809.

An Act for vesting part of the devised estates of John Tirel Morin Esquire, deceased, situate in the counties of Buckingham [Weedon Lodge and Hardwick] and Middlesex, in Trustees, to be sold for discharging incumbrances affecting the same; and or laying out the residue of the monies to arise by such sale in the purchase of other estates, to be settled to the same uses as the estates to be sold. 1809.

An Act for inclosing lands in the parish of Marsworth, in the county of Buckingham. 1809.

An Act for inclosing lands in the parish of Bledlow, in the county of Buckingham. 1809.

4. BAS early documents

Appeal for new members in order to raise money to support the proper housing for the Muniments, December 1928.

Assurance policy between Phoenix Assurance Company and the Rev. Charles Lowndes, Secretary to the Bucks Archaeological and Architectural Society, 20 February 1863.

5. Aylesbury Grammar School Books

ANON.: Half hours in the wide west over mountains, rivers and prairies. The Half Hour Library of travel, nature and science for young readers. 1900. Prize awarded to George G. Bell, Aylesbury Grammar School.

*Diana Gulland
Hon. Librarian/Archivist*

THE NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

SUMMARY OF FIELD VISITS AND LECTURES ORGANISED BY THE SECTION DURING 2010

13th February. Buckinghamshire's Amphibians & Reptiles: Tony Marshall explained how the Buckinghamshire Amphibian and Reptile Group was set up in 2007 with the aim of increasing our knowledge of the County's herpatofauna. Although only a handful of species are known from Bucks (and Britain) little is known about their distribution. Such baseline information is vital in order to monitor changes and for making informed decisions on their conservation. Tony ran through the local species: Common Frog, commonest of all our amphibians and reptiles but now heavily reliant on suburban garden ponds; Common Toad, more common in the countryside than towns; Smooth Newt, commonest of our three species of newt; Palmate Newt, our rarest newt, more common in north and western Britain; Great Crested Newt, our largest newt and often commoner than thought; Grass Snake, our commonest snake reaching lengths of over 3ft; Adder, seemingly very rare in Bucks; Slow Worm, a legless lizard and commonest reptile; and Common Lizard, not so common in Bucks, only recorded from a handful of locations.

All accounts were accompanied by distribution maps that tended to show the distribution of recorders more than the species, hence Tony's request for more records. To this end useful hints for identification were provided: The string-like spawn of toads which is less often seen than the shapeless mass of frog spawn due to their preference for larger and more vegetated ponds; the variation of male newts' crests during the breeding season in spring; and the white or yellow collar on the Grass Snake and the dark zigzag pattern on the Adder. Tips for recording included nocturnal pond watches for newts (especially Great Crested Newts) and putting a carpet on top of your compost heap to encourage Slow Worms to come to the top.

Tony briefly looked at some of the rarer amphibians and reptiles reported from Buckinghamshire, including a Smooth Snake record from Littleworth Common, near Burnham, in 1960 (complete with photograph). The Smooth Snake is Britain's rarest

snake, occurring in small numbers in a few locations in Dorset, Hampshire and Surrey. The 1960s also saw the release of 100 Sand Lizards in Buckinghamshire. The following year only one was found, and none in subsequent years. The distinctive but rare Natterjack Toad was recorded from the Bucks/Beds border in the 1910/20s, although details are vague. Some organised re-introductions have taken place in Bedfordshire, although there are no recent records from Bucks. As with all other groups alien species have also made it onto the county list. The small Midwife Toad, so called due to the habit of the male carrying strings of eggs wrapped around his back legs, was famously introduced to a garden in Bedford in 1898. Small numbers were subsequently carried to other gardens, which may explain records from the Wycombe area. Red-Eared Terrapins, made popular as pets by the 1990s Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles film, have found their way into local ponds and lakes, notably Willen Lake, as a result of outgrowing their tanks. These voracious feeders can have a devastating effect on our native aquatic fauna. Although they can survive for several years the British climate has, so far, not been conducive to breeding. Tony asked people to keep an eye out for this and other ex-pets such as the European Pond Tortoise (tortoise in name, terrapin in nature). If you have any amphibian or reptile records or would like more information, visit the Buckinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group website at www.bucksarg.org.uk

6th June. Priestfield Arboretum: Members took the opportunity for an informal look around Priestfield Arboretum during their summer open day. This secluded collection began in the 1920s with Thomas Priest planting around 400 trees. After his death in 1942 the arboretum fell into decline and became overgrown. This, along with the hurricane of 1987 and storms of 1990 has meant that only 98 trees from the original planting have survived. However, since renovation began in 1983 there has been an ongoing programme of plantings that has

helped to increase and enrich the collection. The arboretum contains a number of interesting broadleaf species including Liquidambers, Butternuts and a Hupeh Rowan. However, it is with conifers that Priestfield excels, with nearly one hundred species and varieties present from all (temperate) corners of the planet. The guidebook describes Priestfield as a library of trees and that is certainly true, whether you simply wish to browse and learn how to distinguish the more familiar groups such as pines, spruces, firs, cedars and hemlocks and so on, or to seek out more obscure genera like the podocarps, fitzroyas, Cunninghamias to mention but a few. Our plan for the day was simple: to see as many species as possible. And so, armed with an annotated map and accompanied by fine weather we wove intricate paths through this leafy Buckinghamshire library, seeking out species from far-flung corners of the world, from Vladivostok to Patagonia, from California to Tasmania. For information on future open days visit www.priestfieldarboretum.org.uk

3rd July. A Botanical Walk around Pitstone Fen and College Lake: The botanising began in the car park of College Lake while waiting for people to turn up. Plants included Welled Thistle with its softly-spined stem, Common Broomrape, Vervain and Dark Mullein complete with a distinctively coloured Mullein Moth caterpillar. Such was the diversity here that Roy returned after the meeting to compile a list of 100 herbaceous plants you can see before you leave the car park. Having obtained the key we headed over the railway bridge to Pitstone Fen. Gradually descending from road level we encountered Wild Strawberries with their miniature red fruit, Perforate and Hairy St John's-Wort, Agrimony, Ploughman's Spikenard (not in flower), Bee Orchid and Common Twayblade while Ringlets, Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites fluttered here and there. Reaching the lowest part of the fen the real highlight for me was the colony of Marsh Helleborines. Pitstone Fen is one of only two Buckinghamshire locations (two others having been lost due to drainage). Over 30 flowering spikes were found growing in the lower part of the fen near a small pool. Heading to higher ground we searched for Field Mouse-Ear. This is the only known site in Buckinghamshire. It had been found flowering by Roy a year earlier but today, without any flowers, we were unable to locate it.

We returned to College Lake for lunch and lots more plants. Dragon's Teeth was found sprawling across the bare chalky banks of a path leading down to the lake. This is probably the best location in Bucks to see this introduced legume. A walk around the arable weeds fields revealed a number of once common cornfield species including Cornflower, Corn Cockle, Corn Marigold, Broad-Leaved Spurge and Field Cow-Wheat. Glorious weather, expert company and a wealth of plants made this trip one of the highlights of the year

20th November. Messages in Stone: Graham Hickman of the Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group was the speaker for this well attended talk. Beginning with the county's oldest rocks an image of what Buckinghamshire would have looked like 190 million years ago was shown – surprisingly similar to the modern day Bahamas! Explaining how Buckinghamshire's rocks get younger as you move from the north-west to the south-east, Graham proceeded to take us on a virtual tour through the county's geology. Environmental reconstructions were accompanied by a look at the rock types and fossil assemblages found within the resulting strata, while familiar modern-day panoramas were interpreted through an understanding of their geological past. Throughout the talk the local geology was put into the wider context of plate tectonics, showing the opening and closing of oceans and the separating and colliding continents to give a real idea of why our local rocks have formed in such dramatic environments from today. Also included in the talk was the often overlooked subject of Buckinghamshire's hidden geology, as revealed by various boreholes. A notable example was from the two boreholes sunk at Calvert. In 1905 an initial bore was drilled to a depth of 445 feet in search of water for the developing brickworks. While the water found was salty it also released an inflammable gas. Not much was made of this (although one member commented that it was used to light a local railway station) until 1911, when knowledge of the gas became more widely known and a second bore was drilled. This reached 1,300 feet but found no recurrence of the flammable gas. However, geological analysis of the resulting cores shows that after 440 feet the rock changes from the familiar 190 million year-old Jurassic limestones found in the north of the county to shales dating back 490 million years. One

section from the top of the shales shows a rusty, red staining which thought to be all that is left of the sandstones deposited by the vast deserts that once covered the county (and the rest of Britain) and which were later eroded prior to the Bahamian-like warm tropical seas depositing the limestones we

now find in the north of the county. Over the course the talk Graham illustrated how much information there is to find if we know how to read the messages in stone. For more information on the Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group visit www.bucksgeology.org.uk.