

**Nigerian Field Society (UK Branch)**  
Report for 2016

The annual general meeting (AGM) was held at the Red Lion Hotel in Bredwardine, Herefordshire, on 24 April 2016. The existing office holders were confirmed in their positions, as follows: Chairman and Vice-President of the Council of the Parent Society Resident in the UK (Joyce Lowe), Vice Chairman (Jen Maddison), Treasurer (Lilian Coe), Secretary (Philip Allsworth-Jones), and Newsletter Liaison Officer (Barbara Ryder). Other members of the committee are John Appleby, Stephen Graham, Brian Hopkins, and Elaine Oldham. Margaret Hall stated that she would be willing to join the committee. The Treasurer reported that there were 107 paid up members of the Branch. The meeting approved the suggestion that the Nigerian Field should be digitised, in accordance with the procedure outlined by the Secretary.

During our stay in Bredwardine, we had the opportunity to visit Brobury Farm, thanks to the kindness of the Blandford family, as well as Brobury House Gardens and St Andrew's Church Bredwardine, which dates back to at least early Norman times. The Blandford family possess a very interesting map of the area (which is well known among fishermen) dated 1753. Brobury House is currently owned by Keith and Pru Cartwright. Among other things, we learned about the situation in the interwar years when the property belonged to Major-General Thomas Pitman of the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars. According to contemporary reports, the entire ground floor of the house was done up in heavy brocade in his regimental colours of crimson and gold. Pansies in the garden were of the same colour, and the apple trees in the orchard were drawn up in ranks as squadrons. The house and garden today look rather different. We also enjoyed "Cathy's Village Teas" in the Village Hall behind the Red Lion, an occasion which might be described (in a good way) as a 1950's trip down memory lane.

The summer meeting, arranged by Sheila Everard, took place in the Scilly Isles, an archipelago off the southwest coast of Cornwall, on 27-30 June 2016. Activities included a visit to Tresco Abbey Gardens, after a very wet crossing from St Mary's, one of the five inhabited islands where the visiting group was based. A wide variety of sub-tropical plants (suitably protected from the Atlantic gales) are grown in the Gardens. The islands are well known as the scene of many shipwrecks, and some artefacts surviving from these disasters are on display. A number of members extended their stay either before or after the official visit.

The autumn meeting was held in Cobham on 8-9 October 2016. On the first day, we met in Church Gate House, next to St Andrew's Church, which we visited later. Two of Frank Speed's films were shown, followed by an illustrated lecture by Doig Simmonds on the subject of "Yoruba cosmology". As he said, his lecture was an attempt to validate an ancient philosophical system and win back some respect for it. He covered many aspects of this subject in his address, a short version of which has been printed in the UK Branch Newsletter published in January 2017. We were introduced to St Andrew's Church by Dr David Taylor, who explained its history, probably going back to Anglo-Saxon times. There are monuments to many local notables, including the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold. There is also a plaque which has been installed recently to the Diggers, a radical sect active in Oliver Cromwell's time, led by Gerrard Winstanley. They installed themselves in Cobham for a short while, after having been evicted from their first settlement at St George's Hill Weybridge. On 9 October the group visited the Royal Horticultural Society's Garden at Wisley, the first time the UK Branch has been there since 1970.

#### **Programme for 2017**

Spring Meeting and AGM: Eastbourne, 22-23 April 2017.

Summer Meeting: Pembrokeshire, 3-4 June 2017. Autumn

Meeting: Carlisle, 9-10 September 2017.

Philip Allsworth-Jones, Branch Secretary