

# THE SOCIETY

## *Membership*

The Society learnt with regret of the deaths of Harry Bradburn, Mrs May Cooper, Frank Davies, Sir Frank Francis, Mrs P. C. Gardiner, Professor W. F. Grimes, Mrs H. J. Howie, Mrs N. James, Mrs Joan Kunzer, Miss K. Leslie, Mrs A. L. McCann, Mrs P. Munro, E. A. Remnant (Life Member, died in 1969) and Kenneth Webb.

At the beginning of 1989, there were 358 ordinary members, 122 family memberships, 3 juniors, and 14 affiliated societies.

## *Council*

Council met five times. Dr Arnold Baines, FSA was elected chairman. Co-opted was Ted Bull (Meetings Organizer and Newsletter Editor).

Council decided at its July meeting that subscription rates, basically unchanged since 1981, had to be increased for 1989 in line with inflation over the previous eight years. Minimum rates to be—ordinary member £8, Family membership £12, junior £4 without *Records* or £8 with, and affiliated society £12. Price of *Records* on publication would be £11 plus £1 packing & delivery.

## *Bucks County Council*

### *Library & Museum Sub-Committee*

Society representatives were Elliott Viney, FSA, Dr Arnold Baines, FSA and Dr R. P. Hagerty. At its March meeting the sub-committee welcomed Colin Dawes, the new County Museums Officer, on his second day in office.

The Society owns major parts of the County Museum buildings which were let on a 42-year, full-repairing lease to the County Council in 1957 at a rent of £1 per annum, the lessee being also responsible for staffing and operating. All items of the collection acquired before 1957 belong to the society.

The structure of the buildings in places has now been judged unsafe for museum purposes by the County Architect. The Museum will, therefore, be closed from the end of March 1989 and staff and material moved to what was Halton Middle School, so that a thorough survey can be made of the structural condition of the Museum buildings. The County Council will then have to reach a decision as to the action it wishes to take, a decision that must depend on financial considerations.

Society representatives, backed by Council, have indicated willingness to offer a long-term lease to the County Council on the termination of the present lease in 1999. Alternatives for County Council consideration are—either to repair, strengthen, adapt, alter and extend the existing Museum buildings and take up such a long-term lease from 1999, or to repair the existing buildings to the extent required by the current lease but with no intention of taking up a new lease in 1999 (possibly planning or building a County Museum elsewhere).

Recommendations as to the future development of the County Museums Service and the County Museum have been presented to the sub-committee by the Area Museums Service for South East England and the County Museums Officer. The recommendations call for increased activity in virtually every part of the Service, requiring increased staffing, and of course increased funding. Archaeology is just one of the seriously underfunded and understaffed areas.

## *Lecture Series*

Ted Bull arranged seven lectures, held on Saturday afternoons. At the County Museum, the usual venue, the Education Room was always well-filled. Dr Wallace's lecture at the Amersham Community Centre attracted an audience of over 150.

- 23 January: In 'Taplow Revisited', Grace Scrimgeour described the British Museum's recent reappraisal of the famous Anglo-Saxon burial and its treasures.
- 30 January: At the Amersham Community Centre, in conjunction with the Amersham Society, Beaconsfield and District Historical Society, Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society and Gerrards Cross Historical Society. Dr Patrick Wallace gave an enthralling account of the 20 years of excavation of 'Viking Dublin'.
- 20 February: Elliott Viney traced the 'Development of the English Landscape Garden'.
- 19 March: Dr R. P. Hagerty surveyed 'Romano-British Traces in Bucks'.
- 7 May: At the Great Missenden Misbourne Centre. Tony Harman reminisced on the theme of his TV documentary series 'Seventy Summers'.
- 19 November: Ted Sammes described the long history of 'Mills and Milling'.
- 3 December: 'Early Photographs of Aylesbury', with commentary by Elliott Viney, Brian Simmonds, George Lamb and the audience.

#### *Outings*

Five outings were arranged by the President. All enjoyed reasonable weather in a generally dubious summer.

- 4 June: Somerset. Montacute House (NT). Brympton d'Evercy House (C. Ponsonby-Fane).
- 16 July: East Sussex. Herstmonceux Castle (Royal Observatory). Battle Abbey (English Heritage). Great Dixter (Quentin Lloyd).
- 27 August: Northamptonshire. Longthorpe Cathedral. Boughton House (Duke of Buccleuch).
- 17 September: Derbyshire. Bolsover Castle (English Heritage). Haddon Hall (Duke of Rutland).
- 8 October: Church Crawl, The Lee (ancient and modern), Amersham (Drake Chapel), Chalfont St Giles, Gerrards Cross, Chenies (Bedford chapel). Also visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum.

#### *Environmental*

Council has confirmed its policy that, in dealing with structure plans, local plans, planning applications and so forth, comment should be confined to architectural and archaeological implications, in co-operation with the Council for British Archaeology and the County Field Archaeologist. The Hon. Secretary acts as county agent for the CBA which must, by statute, be notified of proposed demolitions affecting Listed Buildings.

Other matters should be left to other bodies, such as local conservation societies. Landscape impact was the concern of the County Keeper of Natural History and Geology (with assistance if required from the Hon. Secretary of the Natural History Section) and such bodies as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Chiltern Society.

During the year, some 130 planning applications affecting Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments were dealt with. Two objections were registered both of which were upheld, although one (demolition of Lower Greatmoor Farm to allow extraction of brick clay) will go to public inquiry. Comments were made in 21 other cases.

#### *County Museum Archaeological Group*

Due in no small degree to lack of funding, 1988 was a dead year as regards excavations involving Group participation. The Group undertook several field-walks and otherwise continued, in its Tuesday sessions at the County Museum, to assist the County archaeological staff in post-excavation work and other activities.

#### *Publications*

*Records of Buckinghamshire*, Volume 28 (1986) was distributed during April with the help of the Corps of Deliverers for whose assistance the Society is again grateful. Our thanks are due also to the Hon. Editor, John Chenevix Trench, FSA, for his continuing devotion in editing and arranging production not only of *Records* but of the Milton Keynes monographs. Spring and Autumn Newsletters were also distributed.

## NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

In 1988 the Section's activities had added interest as we were asked to take part in two exhibitions. The first, called 'Bucks Goes Wild' and organised by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust (BBONT), was held on 25 and 26 June at Aylesbury Civic Centre, when many organizations connected with the countryside were asked to provide displays with a view to making the general public more aware of the need for conservation and make known what is already being done in the County. With help from County Museum staff, a display was mounted of photographs and literature which gave some idea of what the Section and the Society generally are involved in. Literature was handed to those who visited the stand and some showed genuine interest about membership of the Society. To increase awareness of the countryside and its conservation a programme of field events was organized to which the public were invited. At BBONT's request the Section promoted a natural history walk to see butterflies and flowers. Victor Scott kindly offered to lead and on 10 July 14 people met on a damp afternoon at Longdown Hill National Trust car park to walk over Grangelands. Butterflies seen where Marble White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Heath. Many plants were identified including Orchids—Pyramidal, Common Spotted, Fragrant, Bee and Musk (49 of the latter counted at one site).

The second exhibition was at the Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newlands Park, Chalfont St Giles. As one of their special events of the year a 'Chiltern Wildlife Watch Day' was held on 17 July to further the cause of nature and wildlife conservation and the Section was asked to be represented. Our Aylesbury Civic Centre display was set up again, its location being in the toll house which has been translated from London Road, High Wycombe to the Museum. Many people inspected the display and were given literature.

The following is a summary of our own programme, indoor lectures being held as usual at the County Museum.

*16 January:* A subject of topical interest was aired when Roy Maycock spoke at the year's first indoor meeting. A good attendance heard him talk about the results of his survey of 'The Flora of Buckinghamshire Churchyards'. Should churchyards have grass cut to near bowling-green standards or left, at least in part, so that wild flowers and insects can flourish? For the benefit of any enquirer, BBONT has produced a leaflet on the subject of care of churchyards.

*13 February:* A winter birdwatch at Calvert's Jubilee Reserve. Having to book the date a year in advance one takes a chance with the weather. This day's weather was rotten, blowing a near-gale, damp and cold, and thus we are more than usually grateful to Crispin Fisher for turning out to welcome a small number of members. On the water were seen Tufted Duck, Mallard, Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, Widgeon, Coot and Goldeneye; and Common, Lesser Blacked-back, Black-headed and Herring Gulls. Elsewhere: Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Pheasant, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Redwing, Great and Blue Tit.

*12 March:* There was another good attendance when the Section's President, Sir Thomas Barlow, talked about and showed slides of his recent visit to the Galapagos Islands.

*9 April:* The Section's annual general meeting, following which there was a showing of members' slides.

*21 May:* Mick Jones, Warden, showed 17 members around Dancers End Reserve. He talked of his experiments in controlling Dogwood and how the BBONT sheep are used in the management of the reserve. A male Duke of Burgundy fritillary was seen on its food plant, the Wayfaring Tree. Among other plants seen

were White Helleborine, Butterfly Orchid, Twayblade, Wood Vetch, Sweet Woodruff, Fly Orchid, Figwort, Valerian, Ramson, Solomon's Seal, Bugle, Yellow Archangel, Lady's Mantle, and Adderstongue fern.

*9 July:* Nine members went to Dry Sandford Pit reserve near Abingdon. Dr David Lloyd was the guide at this very interesting reserve which also contains a geological SSSI. Sightings of particular interest were Weld, Barberry and masses of Marsh Helleborine. Scarlet Tiger Moths had come over from their nearby Cothill Fen habitat, and we were fortunate to see a pregnant Common Lizard.

*10 September:* Members Mr and Mrs Colmer were hosts for this visit to Millfield Wood Reserve near High Wycombe and a party of 16 enjoyed a fine afternoon. Herb Paris in fruit was one of the more exciting sightings. This was also an opportunity to see an interesting gardening experiment with cultivation adjacent to natural areas left for wildlife.

*1st October:* Victor Scott was the expert guide when a party of 16 met in the woods above Bow Brickhill to look for fungi. Owing to unsuitable weather conditions in the days before the visit expectations for a 'good crop' were not high, but the following were identified: *Boletus variegatus*, *Calocera viscosa*, *Collybia maculata*, *Geastrum Triplex*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Laccaria laccata*, *Lactarius rufus*, *Lycoperdon excipuliforme*, *L. pyriforme*, *Panaeolus semiovatus*, *Paxillus involutus*, *Piptoporus betulinus*, *Psilocybe semilanceata*, *Russula atropurpurea*, *Russula emetica*, *R. ochroleuca*, *Scleroderma areolatum*, *S. citrinum*, *Stereum purpureum*, *Tricholomopsis rutilans*.

*12 November:* An indoor talk on fungi by Peter Creed attracted an audience of just 15, but those present enjoyed a clear and informative lecture enhanced by fine photography.

*10 December.* Once again Victor Scott entertained a large gathering when he spoke about the countryside and wildlife of Tunisia and

Morocco and showed slides taken on a recent visit.

Our Honorary Recording Secretary, Aubrey T. Woodward, writes: In the main 1988 was a succession of dull-weather months although, according to the weathermen, no excessive amounts of rain were recorded; but it was very dismal and damp, especially during the summer months when the usual species of butterflies were scarce. Autumn species were also down in numbers, the usual flush of Small Tortoiseshells was absent and it was a rare sight to see a Peacock or Red Admiral. Late summer moths such as the Silver Y were also scarce. There was however a plague of Large and Small Whites and in a number of gardens greenstuff plants had the appearance of lace curtains.

Wild flowers were very good, particularly Orchid species, and the Snakes-head Fritillary flowered well at its site south-west of Aylesbury.

Spring migrant birds are, sadly, showing a decline in numbers. Warblers, Flycatchers and Swallows were almost non-existent in the Aylesbury area. A Hobby was observed near Winchendon in August and in June the bird population around my house (at Stone) was preyed upon by a Sparrowhawk which took two small birds while I was in the garden. Watching this raptor returning to the same wood several times with prey one could only assume it was feeding young.

Holly and Cotoneaster berries were numerous. This makes one wonder about the old saying that many berries portend a hard winter, but the fact that Redwings and Fieldfares are absent from the area seems to cancel this out.

(Aubrey Woodward, whose address is on the Natural History Section's programme card, is always grateful to hear of interesting sightings.)

**OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY**  
(as at 31 December 1988)

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