

THE SOCIETY

Membership

We in the Society learnt with regret of the deaths of Messrs E. H. Bailey, G. W. Brady, J. A. Cutforth, L. H. Eastgate, H. L. Gibson, W. A. Nevin and J. Sanders.

At the beginning of 1992, we numbered 342 ordinary members, 106 family or household memberships, one junior member (with Records), 16 life members, 4 ex-officio members and 12 affiliated societies.

Council

Council met four times. Edward Legg was elected chairman. Dr Arnold Baines FSA and Ted Bull were coopted.

For nearly fifty years County Treasurers have served as Society Hon. Treasurers. Owing to increased official demands on the present County Treasurer, this arrangement has had to end. We wish to record our thanks to all those Hon. Treasurers who served us so well.

The new Treasurer is Brian Davis who is employed by the Bucks Council for Voluntary Service to serve five voluntary organisations previously served by the County Treasurer.

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.

At the time of writing, it appears practically certain that the County Council will agree to start a three-year refurbishment of the County Museum in April 1992. Provision of an enlarged Art Gallery must depend on funding raised from a Public Appeal soon to be launched.

It is assumed that the Technical Centre at

Halton will be retained permanently by the Museum Service.

As long ago as 1974, the Sub-committee agreed in principle to set up a County Archaeological Unit. Out then Hon. Secretary noted that "in the present financial crisis it is unlikely to see the light of day for some time to come". As a first step, a Field Archaeologist has been appointed this year to assist the County Archaeologist. The need for an adequately staffed and financed County Unit is now all the greater to fill the gap left by the demise of the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit and we continue to contribute to representations to the County Council to that effect.

Lecture Series

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

12 January: Mr J. H. Venn took us in search of Bucks windmills and illustrated his finds with views old and new.

16 February: Mr T. Owen related the story of Pitstone Farm Museum, with slides old and new of the collection.

9 March: Professor W. Mead described and illustrated landscape and field pattern studies with particular reference to Bucks.

9 November: Mrs Bambi Stainton talked on prehistoric Orkney.

7 December: Mr Julian Hunt took us through an exercise in detailing the construction of missing enclosure maps.

Outings

Five outings were arranged by our President. All enjoyed reasonable weather, although there was a most biting wind for the May outing.

4 May: Derbyshire, The important Anglo-Saxon church at Repton and Robert

Adam's masterpiece, Kedleston Hall (National Trust). The complexity of new roads encountered prevented the planned visit to the 1662 church at Foremark.

- 8 *June*: Worcester & Hereford. The spectacular remains of Witley Court (English Heritage) and the unique baroque church of Great Witley. Then Berrington Hall (National Trust).
- 6 *July*: Perambulation of the bounds of Upper Winchendon. The original charter dates from 1004; it was expounded and the perambulation led by Dr Baines.
- 3 *August* Somerset. Wells Cathedral, precincts and Bishop's Palace. Glastonbury Abbey.
- 12 *September* Bucks Church Crawl. Leckhampstead, Lillingstone Lovell, Lillingstone Dayrell, Maids Moreton, Biddlesden, Hillesden and Twyford. Perhaps because of postponement by a week, participants were not as numerous as usual.

County Museum Archaeological Group

The most exciting dig of the year uncovered a further twenty-two inhumations in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery adjacent to Dinton Folly, adding to a few unearthed during

building of the Folly in 1769 and some nineteen excavated in 1859.

Environmental

The Royal Bucks Hospital in Aylesbury, now empty, will very likely be sold off and demolished. It was built in 1861 with Florence Nightingale's involvement in the design. Attempts to have it listed have been turned down by the Department of the Environment on grounds of insufficient architectural or historical interest.

Publications

Records of Buckinghamshire Vol 31 (1989) were distributed in April. Once again, all of us are grateful to all those who helped in the distribution. This was a weighty issue which fact, combined with the increased postal rates, meant it was much more expensive to post than previous issues. Spring and Autumn Newsletters were also sent to members.

We wish to thank the Ernest Cook Trust for a grant of £120 toward publication in *Records of Buckinghamshire Vol 32 (1990)* of the report of investigation of an Iron Age site on land owned by the Trust at Coldharbour Farm, Aylesbury.

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

Another year of interesting lectures and field visits was arranged by the Natural History Section for 1991.

19th January: Illustrated talk on British Alpines by Robin Bush, with excellent slides of flora from the limestone areas of the Burren in Ireland and the grikes of N.Yorkshire. The Highlands of Scotland particularly Ben Lawers, the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland, and Cape Wrath also provided examples.

2nd February: A winter bird watch at Tring Reservoirs led by Captain Sir Thomas Barlow. Large numbers of Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Teal and Widgeon sighted.

16th March: Illustrated talk on New Zealand by Victor Scott. Once again a most successful meeting, with more excellent slides of the flora.

13th April: After the Annual General Meeting Martin Albertini gave a very informative talk on Macromoths of Buckinghamshire, covering the various families with representative slides.

18th May: Rushbeds Wood, with Becky Woodell. Our visit coincided with the peak flowering time of the bluebells. After an interesting introductory talk on the history of this ancient wood, part of the former Royal Forest of Bernwood, various birdsongs were identified as the woodland was traversed.

22nd June: An enjoyable and varied afternoon was organised for us at the Wildflower Meadows, Ashton, Northants. A party of fifty was taken by the farm manager and secretary from the famous Chequered Skipper Inn to the old unimproved meadow from which seed is harvested. After tea Dr Miriam Rothschild gave an informal talk.

6th July: Geological field trip to Upware, Cambridgeshire, combined with a visit to Wicken Fen; led by Kate Hawkins.

13th July: Finemere Wood, for butterflies, led by Trevor Munns and Nick Bowles. BBONT bought this 60-acre site from the Forestry Commission two years ago. Some fourteen species of butterfly and moth were identified, plus various flora and a Common Lizard.

7th September: Dancers End Waterworks, with Mick Jones, who once again gave a lot of time to making the Section's visit most enjoyable and interesting. Besides 79 acres of Nature Reserve, this site is adjacent to the unimproved chalk grassland of Crong Meadow, as well as the remains of the original waterworks, constructed in 1886 by the Rothschild family and very rich in plant and animal life.

12th October: Our annual Fungus Foray, with Victor Scott, this time at Coombe Hill. In spite of the dry season, some 26 species were identified.

2nd November: Magnificent slides of African wildlife, and a stimulating talk by John Wyatt, covering the interaction of the various fauna and the effect of human activity on them and their environment. An interesting example of this was the appearance of elephants without tusks as a result of man's hunt for ivory.

Visit to Upware Bridge Pit and Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire

On the 6th July 1991, the Society's recently formed geology group visited Bridge Pit North, which has been excavated in the small patch of 'Corallian' Limestone some 1.543 km across between the River Cam and Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire. This limestone occurrence represents a small patch reef and associated

skeletal sand/oolite which was deposited in agitated shallow water on the flanks of a low lying landmass to the southeast. The limestones are dated to the *Densiplicatum* Zone of the Oxfordian. They lie upon an eroded Oxford Clay surface, of the *Corandatum* Zone, which has been exposed in some deep pits dug in the floor of a quarry, flooded at the time of the visit.

The Upware reef is equivalent in age to the coral reefs of Wheatley and Steeple Ashton near Oxford, some 110 km southwest. The debris slopes of the Wheatley reef wedge out just west of Holton Brook (which forms the Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire border), to be replaced eastwards by the more or less age equivalent Amphill Clay across the South Midlands, interrupted only by the Upware Reef.

The limestone consists of ooliths cored with shell fragments in a shelly lime-mud. Corals are replaced by sparry calcite. Common fossils found during the visit were bivalves, particularly Oysters and Pectinids, gastropods,

ammonites, echinoids, corals, and a striking abundance of crinoid (Sea Lily) debris.

The basal bed of the Upware reef limestone is 0.3 m thick, massive, and with a considerable evidence of burrowing at its basal contact. The underlying Oxford Clay, only observable in spoil heaps, yielded fragments of an indeterminate *Perisphinctid* ammonite, Oysters and Serpulid worm tubes.

In the afternoon several members went on a visit to the National Trust's nature reserve at Wicken Fen. Broadwalks and easy paths provided access to the Sedge Fen area where traditional management techniques of regularly cropping fen vegetation have preserved the distinctive flora. The Broadwalk Trail took us along Wicken Lode, one of the ancient waterways across the fenlands of Cambridgeshire, and by ditches and drains, all with abundant waterside vegetation and insect life. The hot still day provided perfect flying conditions for the many dragonflies and damselflies inhabiting the reserve.