

## THE SOCIETY

The year 1998 was in many ways a difficult year for the Society, mainly because of the crisis over the cut-backs at the County Museum, but also as a result of the resignation of our President. Elliott Viney had been our Secretary from 1954 to 1979 and the President from that year onwards. His input to the Society's activities has been enormous and he concluded his presidency with a valediction given at the AGM, which was reprinted in the autumn Newsletter. He was presented with an engraved rummer and a cheque in affectionate appreciation of all that he had done for the Society. Happily, he has accepted election as a Vice-President of the Society, as also have Colin Dawes and Mike Farley. The new President is Sir Timothy Raison, whose practical help and enthusiasm led to the construction of the new Art Gallery at the Museum and to the first exhibition following its re-opening.

During 1998 the Society made a successful bid to the William Delafield Charitable Trust, which specialises in awarding grants to Libraries and Archives in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. A grant for acid-free boxes and polyester pockets improved the storage of some of the Society's rarer books and manuscripts.

The grant also enabled the purchase of a computer for the Society to catalogue books and documents in the Library and Archives. This benefits the Society in the administration of our holdings and also in assisting with enquiries.

The Society is most grateful for the generous donation made by Lorna Head, which enabled the Society to purchase a table for the Library.

The services of the Museum design officer were offered to the Society to produce publicity boards.

Events during the year included the Young Archaeologists day at the Museum, organised

most successfully by Barbara Hurman, and the Bucks Family History Society Fair at Aylesbury Grammar School, at which we were represented.

### *Membership*

Total membership at 31 December 1998 consisted of 569 individuals and 16 affiliated Societies (549 and 17 at the end of 1997). Newly-affiliated in 1998 was the Buckingham Heritage Trust.

During 1998 admission charges were introduced for Museum entry. After consultation with the Museum, it was agreed that Society members would be allowed entry to the Museum as Season Ticket holders, with the Society making a donation on behalf of each member.

### *Council*

Council met six times during 1998. Subjects for discussion included a paper tabled by Mike Farley on the matter of Consultation on Listed Buildings and funding for the purchase of the Buckingham coin hoard. Partly as a result of a recommendation from the Society, the coin hoard was purchased by the Museum with the assistance of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Arts Collection Fund and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Representations were also made regarding the Aylesbury Vale District Draft Local Plan.

Dr David Thorpe began the analysis of returned questionnaires sent to Society members. Early results showed the distribution of members' addresses, what research was being carried out by members and what subject matters they were interested in.

After 18 years' service Lorna Head stepped down as Archivist for the Society. The Council agreed that the post should be re-combined with

that of Librarian. Diana Gulland accepted this additional responsibility to her post as Librarian. At the AGM, the President made a presentation to Mrs Head for her outstanding achievements as the Society's Archivist and Librarian.

#### 1998 Lectures

The following lectures were held in the County Museum during 1998:

- 24 Jan: *Chesham and its hamlets*, by Julian Hunt, County Records and Local Studies Manager
- 28 Feb: *'Through a glass darkly' - stained glass in Buckinghamshire and neighbouring counties*, by Alan Petford, Lancaster Grammar School
- 28 Mar: *The life of Dr George Lipscomb, historian of Buckinghamshire*, by Roger Bettridge, County Archivist
- 26 Oct: *The old enemies - Buckingham and Aylesbury in the 18th century*, by Dr John Clarke, University of Buckingham

- 21 Nov: *Archaeology around Buckingham*, by Shelagh Lewis
- 12 Dec: *Straw-plait in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire*, by Steve Bunker, University of Luton

#### 1998 Outings

- 16 May: Ewelme church, Dorchester Abbey and Mapledurham House
- 20 June: Winslow Town Walk, led by Julian Hunt
- 11 July: Woburn Abbey and Wrest Park
- 3 Oct: Church Crawl, led by Elliott Viney - Fingest, Turville, Hambleden, Bisham, Upton, Langley Marish and Stoke Poges

Details of lectures and outings organised by the Natural History Section will be found in the report of the Section.

Lindsay James

# THE LIBRARY

## ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY 1998

- BARRATT, D. M. *et al*, eds. Index to Probate Records of Oxfordshire 1733–1857 and the Oxfordshire Peculiars 1547–1856. Oxfordshire Record Society, No. 61, 1997.
- BETJEMAN, John. Poems in the porch. Illustrated by John Piper. 1955.
- COLDWELL, Tony. RAF Halton Railway. The Halton Light Railway. 1992.
- ELLIOTT, John and PRITCHARD, John, eds. George Edmund Street: a Victorian architect in Berkshire. 1998.
- EYERS, Jill. Rocks afoot: geological walks in South Buckinghamshire. 1998.
- FOULGER, Maurice S. A Whitchurch diary: a collection of reports published by the Bucks Herald 1910–1950. 1985.
- GIBSON, Jeremy and PESKETT, Pamela. Record Offices: how to find them. 1996.
- HANSFORD-MILLER, Frank. John Hampden. An illustrated life of John Hampden 1594–1643. 1997.
- HARRIES, Hazel M. One thousand years in a village church: the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Denham. 1998.
- HAWES, V. E. Worminghall (Wornall) in the 1920's compiled from memory. 1991.
- HEWSON, Charles. Scarlet and Blue: a hunting novel. 1912.
- LAVELL, Cherry. Handbook for British and Irish archaeology: sources and resources. 1997.
- LEBEN, Ulrich. Waddesdon The Rothschild Collection: Guide. 1998.
- MEAD, W. R. Aylesbury Grammar School 1598–1998: a commemorative volume. Aylesbury. 1998.
- NEWMAN, Peter R. Companion to the English Civil Wars. 1990.
- ORDNANCE SURVEY. Buckingham & Milton Keynes, Leighton Buzzard & Woburn. Explorer Map No. 192.
- OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION. History online. Course book for Internet Day for Local History, April 1998.
- PHILLIPS, SON & NEALE. The contents of The Abbey Aston Abbots, Buckinghamshire. 1989.
- REED, Michael, ed. Buckinghamshire Glebe Terriers 1578–1640. Buckinghamshire Record Society, No. 30, 1997.
- RICHARDSON, John. The local historian's encyclopedia. 2nd ed. 1993.
- ROTHSCHILD, Miriam. The Rothschild gardens. 1996.
- SHAKESPEARE, Sir William. Walking through leaves, being the memoirs of Sir William Shakespeare 1927–1996. 1996.
- WATTS, Wilfred. A country parson. The Hambleden Valley 1937–1979. 1994.
- WHITE, T. H. The Goshawk. 1975. (White was a Master at Stowe School.)

In addition to the books listed above 70 pamphlets/leaflets were added to stock.

### From the Clive Rouse bequest

- BRITTON, J. & BRAYLEY, E. W. A topographical and historical description of the County of Buckingham. 1813.
- BRITTON, J. & BRAYLEY, E. W. Beauties of England and Wales: or delineations, topographical, historical and descriptive. Extra illustrated additions and insertion of portraits, views, antiquities and maps. Vol. 1, Part III Buckinghamshire. 1801–1814.
- BULL, Josiah. John Newton of Olney and St. Mary Woolnoth. An autobiography and narrative, compiled chiefly from his diary and other unpublished documents. 2nd ed. 1868.
- FULLER, Ronald. Hell-fire Francis. 1939.
- WILLIS, Browne. A survey of cathedrals of (major cities in England and Wales). Vols. 1 & 2. 1742.

*Diana Gulland,*  
HON. LIBRARIAN

## NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

Summary of Field Visits and Lectures organised by the Section during 1998.

**17 January:** The year began with a talk by Dr Alan Showler on 'Alien Plants' Under this heading are plants found in Britain which are not native and have arrived by various means from abroad. Many occur where seed has been put out for the birds. He showed us clear and excellent slides of flora found in Snowdonia, including *Rhododendron ponticum* which is now so invasive. Moving into Buckinghamshire, we enjoyed seeing shots of many of the unusual foreign plants which have become established in the most unexpected habitats, even in town centres and car parks.

**14 February:** Our first field visit in 1998 was a 'Winter birdwatch' at Calvert Environmental Education Centre, led by Elaine Tague and Alan Nelson. In superb and unusually mild weather, nearly 30 species were either seen or heard as we walked round Calvert Jubilee Lake or looked from the Crispin Fisher hide. This area was formerly a brick works and part is now a Shanks & McEwan's landfill site. Of particular interest were a Peregrine Falcon and 2 Lanner/Peregrine 'crosses', bred as a deterrent to the usual Gulls which flock to such localities and are a hazard to the view of the lorry drivers at the brink of the tip! We were fortunate to have such good leaders and particularly Alan's expert bird identification.

**14 March:** Talk on 'Plant Galls' by Maurice Young - 'Cecidology'. There are over 600 galling organisms in the British Isles but we were shown a most interesting collection of slides of just some of them on their various host plants. They can provide shelter for the young of mites, midges, sawflies and even moths and beetles, and are swellings produced by the plant as a result of some foreign organism in the tissue. Maurice's

slides were really clear, and close-up views of the interior of the galls were of particular note. He went on to show growths caused by fungus and bacteria: 'Witches' broom' and 'Fasciation' for example.

**18 April:** Annual General Meeting, followed by Roy Maycock's talk on 'Aquatic Plants'. Accompanied by a wealth of colour slides, Roy showed us examples of flora found in the different habitats associated with water - moving (i.e. rivers and streams) and still (i.e. ponds and lakes). Some plants such as the Duckweeds are found floating on the surface. Pondweeds exist in the water, while others are completely submerged. Marginals included striking slides of plants photographed at ground level with backgrounds of river or canal banks.

**8 May:** On a Friday evening, Ralph Woodward led a party of ten to a Badger sett in a high bank where watchers could sit unobserved. In the broad daylight, five young Badgers came jostling out of the sett - our view was superb as they seemed unaware of our presence. They were accompanied by two adults who were more wary and spent some time checking that the coast was clear. Ralph answered questions and compared the life style of the two well known mammals, Badgers and Foxes, as well as showing us his photographs. It was an excellent meeting. (Margaret Kendrick)

**27 June:** Meeting by the mediaeval bridge at Thornborough, Dr Jill Evers led a field trip to look at the Geology and Archaeology of Thornborough and Coombs Quarry nearby. This visit took us back to the Buckinghamshire of 170 million years ago, in the Jurassic era, when the climate was tropical and the environment was that of a warm, shallow sea. The evidence for this statement can be found within the sediments and fossils of the site. The limestones are muddy to oolitic, known as the Blisworth Limestone, and are very diagnostic of environment.

Calcareous sediment was being deposited in warm waters within the gentle agitation of waves. Fragments of shell and other pieces rolled by this action caused an even coating of calcite, producing perfectly rounded particles known as ooliths ('oo' meaning egg-like). The fossils found within the limestones at the quarry are all marine forms such as corals, brachiopods, gastropods, bivalves (particularly mussels and oysters) and sea urchins.

Above the Blisworth Limestone is the Blisworth Clay, grey in colour. It is possible to find rootlets indicating that sea level has dropped. Nearby at Thornborough, dinosaur footprints have been found in this stratum on the shores of a warm coastal lagoon. (Dr Jill Eyers)

25 July: Windsor Hill and the Black Hedge with Dr Alan Showler attracted a large gathering on a real Summer afternoon. This proved to be a really rewarding visit as, under Alan's expert guidance, many species of flora were found both in the Chiltern beech woodland and on the old chalk grassland, with Juniper on the more open ground. Slow-worms are a feature of this BBONT reserve (a dead one was found) and a very rare sighting of a White Letter Hairstreak butterfly can now be added to a record of some 23 species seen here. A section of the famous 'Black Hedge' mentioned in a Charter of 903 AD runs across Windsor Hill and a shrub count based on Dr. M. D. Hooper's theory of hedgerow dating was carried out by the Natural History Section in 1970 with surprisingly accurate results. Cf. Baines: 'The Boundaries of Monks Risborough', *Recs Bucks.* 23, 1981.

4 September: Moth Trapping and Identification with Eric Britnell, assisted by Paul Bowyer. A promising evening meeting was

rained off but turned into a social occasion with refreshments at 'Wiggintree', High Wycombe. This was a joint meeting with the Wycombe Wildlife Group.

17 October: Fungus Foray at Stockgrove Country Park with Victor Scott, accompanied by Dr Derek J. Schafer of the new Buckinghamshire Fungus Group. In an unseasonably cold wind, nearly 40 different species were found and included several that had not been seen on previous visits. With a variety of habitats, this is always a good area for fungi given favourable conditions.

7 November: 'Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean' by Jean Hall. Introducing her talk with slides of landscapes and people, she showed us some of the rarer flora to be seen in Mallorca, Minorca, Rhodes, Crete and Tunisia. Butterflies, insects and reptiles were not forgotten and the flowers included a particularly fine series of Orchids. Once again, Jean succeeded in giving members a most entertaining afternoon.

5 December: 'Carnivorous Plants': an exciting title for a superb lecture by the Rev. Charles H. Overton from Hughenden. Beginning on a personal note, he went on to describe the characteristics of these strange plants which catch prey in three ways: fly-paper type, pitfall type, and mechanical. As well as slides of the extremely colourful flowers on some species, including close-ups of the stalked glands of the Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), we were shown actual specimens of Sarracenia, native to America, known as Pitcher-plants, Venus's fly-trap (*Dionaea muscipula*) and Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) found in bogs in the British Isles. A most unusual afternoon culminated in horticultural instructions.

Angela Colmer