

THE SOCIETY

2009

2009 proved to be a busy year for the Society, with members' involvement in a wide range of activities and a number of new projects. Progress at Quarrendon regarding transfer of the historic site to the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust was delayed by the general slowdown in development due to the economic downturn. However, a foot-path across the site was completed by the County Council, and members of the Society's Historic Buildings' Group carried out a measured survey of the chapel remains, which formed part of an archaeological report on the conservation and preservation of the structure.

The Historic Buildings' Group, established following a series of workshops and site visits run during the autumn months of 2008, went from strength to strength in 2009. A steering group was convened, with the role of overseeing project work and organising a lecture and outings' programme, and a number of projects were selected for the group to cut its teeth on. Each project was appointed a "champion", responsible for managing that project and reporting back on its progress at the bi-monthly meetings, which were held in the suitably historic Friends' Meeting House in Aylesbury Old Town. A dedicated section of the Society's website was created for the Buildings' Group, and group members began developing their skills in the observation, survey and research of historic buildings, which will move the work forward over the coming months and years.

Another exciting project which consumed much time during 2009 was the forthcoming publication of a book on the archaeology of early Buckinghamshire, due to be launched in 2010, to coincide with a major exhibition at the County Museum. We await this book and the exhibition with eager anticipation; both should prove to be of great interest to the general public, and the book will undoubtedly raise the profile of archaeology and the Society within the county.

More mundane but nonetheless extremely useful, was the Society's purchase of a laptop and digital projector for use by members. This is avail-

able for loan from the Society Library, with a small charge imposed for use off-site and for non-Society business.

The Society was represented at a number of events during the year, including the Buckinghamshire Family History Society Open Day, the Festival of Archaeology Day at the County Museum, both in July, and the Buckinghamshire Local History Network Conference in the autumn, which took the theme of famous Buckinghamshire people. All these events were well attended by the public and offered good opportunities to highlight the work of the Society, and to sell some of our excellent publications.

The year opened on a sad note for Council as a one minute silence was held at the January meeting, in memory of Chairman Mike Davis who passed away in November 2008. Mike Farley was subsequently elected as Chair and continues to serve the Society well in this role. Four council meetings were held during the year: January 17th, March 7th, June 6th and September 26th, with the AGM being held on 17th May 2009.

At the Annual General Meeting, Mike Farley formally retired as Associate Editor of Records of Buckinghamshire, and a presentation was made to thank him for his work in this role over the past 30 years. Professor John Clarke described Mike's retirement as an "important and sad occasion", going on to highlight the many improvements made to the journal over recent years. Maureen Brown also retired from her position as Honorary Secretary, having given service to the Society since 2002. Maureen contributed enormously to the work of Council and produced admirable minutes. She represented a hard act to follow! A presentation was made to Maureen at the AGM.

During 2009 a number of new appointments were made to Council. Thea van Dam joined us in the role of newsletter editor, whilst Peter Marsden was elected as representative of the Historic Buildings' Group. Sue Fox became Honorary Secretary and Julian Hunt (having relinquished the newsletter) took on the task of lecture organiser.

Mike Palmer announced that he wished to take a less active role in the Natural History Section, which continues to be an important part of the Society, and which will be supported by Council in the most appropriate way in the future. Mike was thanked for his work with this section. Richard Gem, our President, was elected as a Trustee of the

Society, following the death of Edward Legg. Four members ended their term on Council: John Cragg, Michael Hardy, Gary Marshall and David Thorpe. Thanks were extended to them all for their contribution to the work of Council over the years of their office.

Lecture Series 2009

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| 3 January | The Diary of a County Magistrate 1689–1705: Roger Bettridge |
| 7 February | Historic Landscapes of Buckinghamshire Towns: David Green |
| 7 March | Archaeology in Milton Keynes – the last ten years: Brian Giggins |
| 7 November | Looking at Medieval Buildings: David Clarke |
| 5 December | Recent archaeological finds in Chiltern Woodlands: John Morris |

Outings 2009

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| 20 June | Coleshill led by Julian Hunt |
| 11 July | Maldon and Ingatestone Hall led by George Lamb |
| 15 August | Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, Quainton and Doddershall House led by Sarah Gray |
| 19 September | Church crawl to churches in the western Vale of Aylesbury led by George Lamb |

Sue Fox, Honorary Secretary

THE LIBRARY

ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE 2009

1. Books

- ADLAM, L. and SIMPSON B. A triumph of restoration: Oxford Rewley Road Station. [History of the Buckingham Railway and the relocation of the Rewley Road Station to the Bucks Railway Centre, Quainton]. 2008
- AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL: Long Crendon Conservation Area designated by AVDC, 2009
- Winslow Conservation Area designated by AVDC, 2008
- BARTHOLOMEW, R.E. The patterns of missionary work and emigration in early Victorian Buckinghamshire, 1849–1878. [Latter-Day Saints; Mormons in Edlesborough, Aylesbury, Wooburn, Simpson]. Brigham Young University, Utah, Studies, Volume 48(1), 2009
- BERKHAMSTED LOCAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY. Berkhamsted: a history and celebration. 2005
- BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL. Planning Department. Buckinghamshire Local Population Survey, 1990
- BULLER, F. Fish & fishermen in English medieval church wall paintings [includes Little Hampden, Little Missenden and Radnage churches]. 2009
- COOPER, L. The Pigotts of Doddershall. 2nd ed. 2006
- COUNTY COUNCILS ASSOCIATION. The Jubilee of County Councils 1889 to 1939. [Contains a survey of Bucks County Council by Sir. L.H. West] 1940?
- DELL, A. John Wilkes: the Aylesbury years (1747–1763) his collected letters to his Agent, John Dell. Bucks Paper No.17, 2008
- ENCLOSURE ACT for the lands in the parish of Monks Risborough, 1830
- FOX, S. Patterns of buildings in Buckinghamshire: a survey of pre-twentieth century domestic buildings in four parishes [Waddesdon, Stone, Great and Little Kimble, Monks Risborough]. MA thesis, 2009
- GETTY, Sir Paul. The Wormsley Library catalogue. 1999
- HANLEY, H. Aylesbury: a history. 2009
- HUNT, J. A history of Coleshill. 2009
- HUNT, J. and THORPE, D. Beaconsfield: a history. 2009
- JAMES, E. Britain in the First Millennium. 2001
- JUNIPER, R. compiler. Sun sand and sapper: memories of Frederick Juniper...in the Great War 1914–18. 2005
- LAKER, J, ed. Romadam Project. A detailed record of Archaeology in Marlow's three-year project. 2008
- MASEFIELD, R. Prehistoric and later settlement and landscape from Chiltern scarp to Aylesbury vale: the archaeology of the Aston Clinton Bypass. 2008.
- MASSINGHAM, H.J. The faith of fieldsman. 1951
- MASSINGHAM, H.J. Through the wilderness. 1935
- MEAD, W.R. Aylesbury: a personal memoir from the 1920s. 2nd ed. 2009
- NICHOLAS, J. ed. The progress and public processions of Queen Elizabeth: from original manuscripts and scarce pamphlets. 2 volumes, 1788
- PUBLIC CATALOGUE FOUNDATION. Oil paintings in public ownership in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. 2009
- ROTHSCHILD ARCHIVE REVIEW of the year April 2007–March 2008
- SHARP, S. ed. Haddenham chronicles No.7, 2009
- SHELDON, J. The Stewkley lads fallen in the Great War. 2009
- SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT COUNCIL. Gerrards Cross Common Conservation Area redesignated. 2009.
- SPALDING, F. John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: lives in art. 2009
- STANBRIDGE, P. St John's, Stone then and now in pictures with an outline history. 2003
- TAYLOR, John A. Bletchley and district at war. 2009
- THORPE, D. ed. An archaeological research framework for Buckinghamshire. Bucks Paper No, 15, 2009
- TODD, M. Ed. A companion to Roman Britain. 2004

- WAINWRIGHT, A.P. and MARSHALL, G. Archaeological survey of the Ashridge Estate, Volume 2 Area A: Ivinghoe Beacon, Steps Hill and Incombe Hole. 2009
- WALLEN, M. ed. Buckinghamshire Bird report 2007.
- WATSON, M. Letters from the front: a Buckinghamshire boy goes to war: a personal diary of the Great War 1915–1919. 2008
- WILLIAMSON, A. Wilkes: ‘A friend to liberty’. 1974
- 2. Map**
The “neighbourhood” map of Aylesbury. 6” to 1 mile. 1949
- 3. BAS early documents**
Papers not previously catalogued, or published in Records of Buckinghamshire:
- On the rudiments of Gothic architecture, by Rev. A. Baker. Lecture delivered at the first meeting of the Society January 13, 1848
- Will of the Wisp, Aylesbury Gaol; Roman mosaic pavement, High Wycombe; weighing against the church Bible, Wingrave. Notes for a speech given at the first meeting of the Society by Robert Gibbs. 1848
- On the archaeology of the County, by Robert Gibbs. Paper given on the occasion of the first meeting of the Society 1848
- Observations on a certificate of William Fleetwood, Sergeant at Law, Recorder of London, and Matthew Dale, Steward of Southwark dated 12 April 1859. An early paper read to the Society
- Some notes on Langley Marish church and the Kedermister Library: notes extracted chiefly from Lipscomb. An early paper read to the Society, anon., n.d.
- Ancient British coins, by J.W.Akerman. A paper which was intended to be read at an early meeting of the Society, n.d.
- Report on the church of the Holy Trinity Bledlow, by George Gilbert Scott, 1875? Newspaper cutting, May 1876, reporting the re-opening of Bledlow church after restoration of the nave, by Scott
- Aylesbury celebrities of the last [18th] century, by Robert Gibbs. An early paper read to the Society, 1877?
- Flyer for the re-opening of Bledlow church by Lord Bishop of Oxford 22 October 1877
- 4. Nigel G. Kirkman Deposit**
Research papers, compiled 1967–1969 (with a few later additions), by Nigel Kirkman whilst a student at the College of Librarianship, Wales:
- Libraries in Buckinghamshire before 1923: Church, Endowed, Monastic, Parish and Circulating Libraries; Mechanics, Literary, Scientific and Art Institute Libraries; Reading Rooms
- List of ancient hospitals of Bucks
- Earliest specimens of typography in Bucks
- Population and numbers of booksellers in Bucks towns, 1914
- Dates for foundation of Bucks elementary and secondary schools
- 5. Additional items**
63 smaller items were also added to stock. These included pamphlets, articles from journals and newspapers and church guides

Diana Gulland
Hon. Librarian/Archivist

THE NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

SUMMARY OF FIELD VISITS AND LECTURES ORGANISED BY THE SECTION DURING 2009

17th January. *Stags, Tanners, Minotaurs and Harlequins – the Natural History of Beetles*. 12 members were present for Martin Harvey's talk on the Coleoptera. The Scottish geneticist, J.B.S. Haldane, in response to being asked what could be learned by studying all of God's creations, said '*The Creator, if he exists, had an inordinate fondness for beetles*'. With nearly 5,000 species in Britain alone, Martin certainly had his work cut out but with evident experience, knowledge and enthusiasm, not to mention an impressive selection of photographs, we were treated to a thorough introduction. The unifying characteristic of the outer wings acting as a hard protective case over the animal's body was noted, and its resulting outcome of allowing beetles to colonise all manner of habitats discussed. The incredible variety within the group was explored, from the sizeable Stag Beetle down to the misleadingly named *Nephanes titan*, which Martin likened to a full-stop with legs. A range of colourful species was illustrated along with unusual behaviour, such as the scorpion-like stance of the Devil's Coach-horse when threatened. Both pest and beneficial species were looked at, including the many forms of the introduced Harlequin Ladybird. On a local level Martin described how recent fieldwork had shown Langley Park to be the third most important site in Britain for deadwood beetle species after the New Forest and Windsor Great Park. All in all, a fascinating insight into an enormously varied but often overlooked world.

21st February. *Winter Bird Watch at Wilstone Reservoir*. 6 people spent a mild, sunny winter afternoon walking around Wilstone Reservoir. A good range of ducks was present including Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Pochard, Pintail, Shoveller, Teal, Gadwall and Widgeon, while other sightings included Great-crested Grebe and Lapwing.

28th March. *AGM followed by Darwin – a local connection*. 36 people were present for Victor Scott's talk in this bicentenary year of Charles Darwin's

birth. However, it was not Darwin but his granddaughter, Lady (Nora) Barlow, who was the subject of his talk. The first half comprised Victor's own reminiscences of Lady Barlow. Known internationally for her work on genetics and for editing much of her grandfather's scientific works, she was also an enthusiastic and influential Buckinghamshire-based natural historian, with the establishment of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Natural History Section in 1947 a lasting achievement. Victor explained how, through a weekend job as a thirteen year old schoolboy mowing the grass for the botanically-minded vicar of Aston Abotts, he was introduced to Lady Barlow. Describing her as one of the most charming and humble people he had ever met, he went on to add that what she didn't know about botany wasn't worth knowing! One particular memory was of a trip to see Asarabacca, a peculiar plant with black flowers, pollinated by snails, in a ditch near Wendover – its only location in Buckinghamshire.

The second half of the talk looked at a particular group of plants much loved by Lady Barlow, the flowers of chalk and limestone, a flora well represented in Buckinghamshire. Species from across Britain were looked at including a number of Chiltern specialities such as Pasque Flower, Coralroot and the Fringed Gentian

18th April. *Botanical Walk around Finemere Wood*. Six people joined County Recorder Roy Maycock for this springtime woodland walk. It was hoped to see carpets of bluebells in all their dusky glory. While they were certainly present and starting to flower, especially in the eastern end of the woods, they were probably a few days off their impressive peak. Hawthorns were just coming into leaf, allowing us to compare and contrast the ordinary Hawthorn with the Midland Hawthorn. The pin and thrum varieties of Primroses were observed in close-up, and their differing arrangements of stamens and styles explained. Other species in flower included Common Dog Violets with their pale spurs, Dogs Mercury, Wood Anemone, Three-

veined Sandwort, Greater Stitchwort and Yellow Archangel. On leaving the woods and heading back to the road a large patch of Glaucous Sedge was spotted growing around a water-filled hollow in an adjacent field. Closer inspection also revealed the presence of Pond Water-crowfoot.

21st November. Darwin and the Tree of Life. 38 people were in attendance for this joint meeting with the Bucks Earth Heritage Group. Dr Peter Skelton of the Open University started by looking at early attempts to classify life beginning with religious notions based on the degree of perfection starting with muck and running through plants, animals, and humans to angels. He discussed some of the developments that provided the foundations for Darwin to build his theory on, most notably the development by Linnaeus of a classification system of living things based on observable characteristics, and also the realisation of the concept of 'deep time', based on the new science of geology that was increasingly showing that the Earth was far, far older than had previously been suggested by religious texts. This provided Darwin with a means to measure variation within and between species, and also a timescale in which these variations could have conceivably taken place. Peter then discussed the various observations, arguments, and people

Darwin worked on and with in the development his theory. Bringing the discussion to the present day, Peter reviewed how modern technology, such as the study of DNA, was able to confirm many of Darwin's ideas. He also showed how it is modifying some of these traditional ideas about evolution. For instance, the traditional image of an evolutionary Tree of Life, in which simple organisms at the bottom evolve over time into more complex ones at the top, has been challenged by the idea that simple life forms actively interact with the more complex organisms across the branches of evolutionary time. This was evidenced by DNA studies showing the similarity of mitochondria, present in all plant and animal cells, to certain types of bacteria, suggesting that mitochondria evolved from once, free-living bacteria that entered into a symbiotic relationship at some point during the evolution of more advanced cells. He also noted how it had been shown that retro-viruses were able to insert their own DNA into that of their hosts, again influencing evolution. This comprehensive and well delivered talk was followed by a lively question and answer session.

*Mike Palmer
Keeper of Natural History
Buckinghamshire County Museum*