

OFFICER'S REPORTS

The Society

2014/15

Thanks to the unstinted efforts of a core of diligent volunteers, over the past year, the Society has continued to justify its claim to be the premier society for the promotion and study of the archaeology, local history, landscape and architecture of Buckinghamshire. One stated objective of the Society has been the defence and protection of the local landscape and archaeological heritage. Whether or not the construction of a high-speed rail link between London and the north of the country will be beneficial to the national economy must be a matter of individual opinion, and is not something on which the Society as such has passed judgment, but undeniably the landscape and the archaeological and architectural heritage of a swathe of rural land running the length of the county from Denham to Turweston will be profoundly affected. There have been a number of initiatives intended to ensure that mitigation procedures are in place and that the general public is made aware of what might be lost as the earthmoving machinery attacks the soil. There were a pleasing number of visitors to the Open Day organised by Michael Farley at Stoke Mandeville, who were made aware of the destruction of the site of the medieval church, where an unknown number of bodies will have been buried and which must be raised up and relocated in a suitable mausoleum. Michael has also planned the forthcoming 'Heritage on the Line' conference, when the impact of HS2 on the county will be discussed by a number of eminent scholars and experts.

It is not only HS2 that threatens to change profoundly the landscape of Bucks. What has also demanded the vigilance of the Society is the matter of planning. The ever-continuing expansion of the London megalopolis makes seemingly insatiable demands for sites to be freed up for the development of an exurban sprawl, threatening to make real the nightmare vision of the face of Chiltern and Vale irredeemably scarred by a redbrick rash. BAS

is maintaining an active watch on planning issues where they might affect landscape and heritage. Last October, Nigel Wilson, a BAS Council member, attended a Stakeholder meeting hosted by AVDC, whose Local Plan was not authorised, making more difficult resistance to unsuitable developments, and hindering the defence of landscape and heritage through the area. BAS is concerned to make planners aware of the need to put in place adequate and effective procedures that will ensure the preservation of landscape and heritage.

One core function of the Society is to support the County Museum. BAS was therefore delighted to welcome the new Director, Richard de Peyer, who brings expertise and experience acquired from his previous posting at Wycombe Museum. Much of the County Museum's collection is provided by BAS, who also own and lease out the building in Church Street where the Museum is housed. The running of the Museum is now the responsibility of a new Museum Trust, and there have been and continue to be lengthy negotiations between the County Council, the Society and the Trust, to establish a satisfactory arrangement that will ensure the proper running of the Museum and housing of the collection. Peter Marsden, the Society's Chairman, and Trustee Michael Farley have devoted much time to the endeavour of ensuring an outcome that fulfils the objectives of the Society.

One objective of BAS is the preservation of a rich heritage of archives and the organisation of the Library. Go into the Museum on a Wednesday, and you will find a devoted team of volunteers led by Marian Miller, sorting and classifying the archives and books, and making available to researchers the documents and volumes they need. Until last year, the position of Honorary Archivist and Honorary Librarian were separate. Marian undertook to act in both roles until a new archivist could be

appointed in the place of Honor Lewington: no volunteer has come forward, so Marian will in future function as both librarian and archivist with the title of Honorary Librarian. She is aided by a team of volunteers who work assiduously in the muniment room in the basement of the building. Garry Marshal has completed the transcribing of the Hohler archive and has started to sort the Society's own records into order. It has been necessary to initiate an appointments system in the Library to accommodate researchers – some of them travelling the length of the country to reach Aylesbury – and to make available to them the documents they require.

Of course, the effectiveness of the Society depends on it having a steady cashflow that must come primarily from its membership subscriptions. Graham Parker the Hon. Treasurer has maintained a careful watch on the finances of the Society and has been able to report that the financial situation of BAS is healthy. This is particularly owing to the higher subscriptions that he had recommended, and that were approved by BAS Council in 2013. Unfortunately, there has been some confusion among members as to what the new rates are, and the Hon. Membership Secretary Bronwen Lee has had a lengthy and frustrating struggle trying to ensure that members of the Society are aware that they need to pay at the new rate rather than at the old one.

The Society was established in the mid nineteenth century with the aim of promoting architectural and archaeological studies. Inspired by this vision, over the past year several enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers have organised a variety of events and visits. Julian Hunt has organised the regular lecture programme, with lectures delivered by Julian himself, Ian Beckett, Richard de Peyer, Michael Farley, and Michael Ghirelli. Michael Hardy ran his ever-popular Church Crawl, this time to include churches towards the Bucks-Beds border on the eastern side of the county. George Lamb organised the summer excursions, which included visits to Amersham, Kenwood House and Hampstead, and Wing and Stadhampton. Julian Hunt, and Peter and Diana Gulland, were excursion leaders. David Thorpe organised the annual Bucks Local History Network conference, held at the Royal Latin School, Buckingham. The audience were presented with a range of lectures under the overall title of *Defining Buckingham-*

shire, delivered by Jeremy Haslam, Julian Hunt, Dr Richard Oliver, Tom Harper, and Dr Kate Tiller.

Conscious of its responsibility to preserve and protect the architectural heritage of the county, BAS Council was pleased to approve a grant towards the restoration of the Lovett monument in All Saints Church, Soulbury, a work by Grinling Gibbons who is most usually remembered for his wood carving, but who produced here a fine memorial wrought in stone.

In 2013, Peter Marsden inspired the formation of an Active Archaeology Group. Following a series of introductory sessions in the winter months, some including hands-on experience, the group has got its hands dirty in the field, concentrating on two projects in particular. At Hogshaw, a band of volunteers aided and advised by Dr Kris Lockyear has been undertaking a magnetometry survey of the site of the Priory or Commandery of the Knights Hospitaller, abandoned and thrown down by enclosing landlords at the end of the fifteenth century. Many of the group also are actively involved in the Chiltern Hillforts Project, systematically surveying the chain of Iron Age enclosures along the length of the chalk scarp from the Thames into Bedfordshire.

BAS publishes its journal, *Records of Buckinghamshire*. Bob Zeepvat the Assistant Editor has ensured that the issue of 2014 maintained the highest scholarly standards with a variety of papers covering the local history, architecture and archaeology of the county. A project is now underway, led by John Dodd, to scan and digitise past issues and make them available online on the Society website. John has also been active in investigating how BAS might be of help in the organisation of County's Historic Environment Record. Diana Gulland has published a complete index of Records of Bucks from the first issue in 1847 to the start of the twentieth century, which will be printed and made available to members in the forthcoming year. As usual, in addition to *Records*, the Society Newsletter was published in spring and autumn.

The BAS Council has met regularly with meetings chaired with energy, enthusiasm and leadership by Peter Marsden. Permanent members include the officers of the Council, along with the renowned scholar of Romanesque architecture, Richard Gem, President of the Society, and Michael Farley, the abiding genius of Buckinghamshire archaeology. Council was fortunate

to see new elected members Nicola Powell, Kim Biddulph, George Lamb and Nigel Wilson, each of them bringing with them energy and new ideas to the table. George was the victim of a horrific crash outside his home last year, and members of the Society will be pleased to know he has returned, recovered and once again enthusiastically making his contribution to the life of the Society.

Finally, with sadness it is necessary to record the passing of Mrs Kathleen Hagerty, Mr Graham Atkins, and Professor William Mead, former President of the Society. The Society is nominally an organisation for the promotion of archaeological studies, but Bill Mead is a reminder that BAS explores areas beyond that defined field: he was

a historical geographer who made an important contribution to our understanding of the development of the landscape of Buckinghamshire, as witness the map of the county on which he painstakingly recorded from aerial photographs the distribution of ridge and furrow. A scholar whose researches took him far beyond the shores of this island, he nevertheless remained deeply attached to the county of his upbringing, and for many years he chose to be closely associated with the Society that concerned itself with the study, defence, and protection of the landscape in which he had been raised.

Michael Ghirelli, Honorary Secretary

The Library

ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE 2014

1. Books

- ASTON, M. & ROWLEY, T. Landscape Archaeology. 1974.
- BELL, Y. The Edwardian Home. 2005.
- BUCKINGHAMSHIRE BIRD CLUB. Buckinghamshire Bird Report 2011. 2013.
- BUCKINGHAMSHIRE BIRD CLUB. Buckinghamshire Bird Report 2012. 2013.
- CHIBNALL, A.C. Beyond Sherington. 1979.
- COPPOCK, J.T. British Landscape through the Ages: The Chilterns. 1962.
- DITCHFIELD, P.H. The Manor Houses of England. 1994.
- DYER, A. Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400–1640. 1995.
- LEGGETT, M.J. Astronomers of Bucks. 2013.
- LEGGETT, M.J. An Historical Atlas of Bucks Astronomy. 2013.
- MEAD, W.R. Pehr Kalm – his London Diary 1748. 2013.
- NORTH MARSTON HISTORY CLUB. The North Marston Story. 2014.
- POOLE, A. & R. The Book of Buckland. 2006.
- RODEN, D. Woodland and its management in the Mediaeval Chilterns. 1968.
- RODEN, D. Inheritance, Custom and Succession in the Chilterns early C14. 1967.
- RODEN, D. Fragmentation of farms and fields C13 and later in the Chilterns. n.d.
- RODEN, D. Demesne farming in the Chiltern hills. 1969.
- ROTHSCHILD, Hannah. The Baroness. 2012.
- ROTHSCHILD ARCHIVE TRUST. Review of the year 2012–2013.
- RUDLING, D. (ed.) Ritual Landscape of Roman South-East Britain. 2008.
- SCHREINER, S. & STREET, J. Midsomer Murders on Location. 2010.
- THROSSELL, E. Hartwell, Bucks. Louis XVIII's Favourite Garden Cottage. n.d..
- YORKE, S. English Canals Explained. 2006.

2. BAS Buildings Group reports

- MARSDEN, P. & FOX, S. 15 Little Horwood Road, Great Horwood. 2013.
- MARSDEN, P. *et al.* The White Horse, Hedgerley. 2014.
- MUIR, A. The History of Windmill Farmhouse (Wingrave). 2013.
- RICE, M. & MARSDEN, P. Old Keepers, Hedgerley. 2014.

3. BAS reports on the impact of HS2

- MARSDEN, P. *et al.* The Lodge, Diddershall. 2014.
- MARSHALL, G., GREEN, D. & MARSDEN, P. Geophysical Survey at Stoke Mandeville Deserted Village Site. 2014.
- PEPLER, K. & COOPER, C. Chetwode.

4. BAS Active Archaeology Group reports

- HEY, P. & WILSON, N. Sharpenhoe Clappers: Iron Age Fort or Rabbit Warren? 2014.
- WILSON, N. Westbury Causeway. 2012.

5. Sale Catalogues

- THIMBLEBY'S. Ilmer Ayrshires (cattle). 1964.

6. Miscellaneous Archives

- H.O. ALLEN archive of building histories and research material relating to Stoke Hammond.
- COX. Photographs of Weston Turville Manor House Architectural Details. 2014.
- FUNNELL archive of postcards, photographs and cuttings relating to Princes Risborough and environs.
- GURNEY and WOODMAN papers. Ink recipe for the Exchequer C16.
- HOUSE OF COMMONS. Returns of Endowed Charities, County of Bucks. 1868.
- E.J PAYNE and his family. A collection of photographs and miscellanea from the papers of the late J.R. CATCH.
- LIPSCOMBE. Photocopy letter 1831.
- Photocopy map of LADY MARY WOLLEYS Estate Wendover. 1620.

7. Additional Items

Journals and 44 other smaller items were also added to stock. These included transcribed records, maps, articles, reports, booklets, CDs, pamphlets, church guides, and newspaper cuttings.

Marian Miller
Hon. Librarian

ON-LINE ACTIVITIES

The Society's website is at www.bucksas.org.uk

The Society's on-line landmark of 2015 was the completion of the on-line index to *Records of Bucks*. A word-search on the Society's website will now return a list of all articles published since 1854 where the searched-for subject is mentioned. This is thanks to the sterling work of Diana Gulland, who re-indexed every article in the 62 volumes published between 1854 and 1916.

An increasing number of articles from back volumes of *Records* are also being made available on-line through the website. During 2015 a total of 97 new articles were added, including:

- *Records* volume 2 part 1 from 1859, where the leading article is on the 'Life and Labours of Browne Willis Esq, of Whaddon Hall'.
- *Records* volume 12 part 4 from 1930, with articles on 'King John's Lodge' at Wraysbury, and by Edwin Hollis on 'Late 14th-century Farm Accounts'.
- *Records* volume 19 parts 3 and 4 from 1974–5, whose leading article is John Chenevix-Trench's classic 'Coleshill and the Settlements of the Chilterns'.

Thanks to work by John Dodd, the process of scanning and digitising old volumes of *Records* is

now much faster. In all, 299 articles from eleven back editions are now available on-line. These can be read on-screen or downloaded and printed locally. To access the articles already available on-line, go to www.bucksas.org.uk/onlinerecords.

Another innovation is the on-line publication of the Society's Spring and Autumn Newsletter on the website. All members continue to receive the Newsletter in printed form, but the on-line edition means that news about the society's activities – and of other archaeology and history societies in the county – is now available to non-members as well.

Only one formal report was published on the website in 2015, on Sharpenhoe earthworks, but new pages were also added about the society's activities around the HS2 high-speed rail project and the 'Heritage on the Line' Conference run in May 2015 to draw attention to the effect this major rail project will have on the historic environment across Buckinghamshire.

To see how particular places are affected, click the place-names on the map at www.bucksas.org.uk/hbgprojects/hs2places.html. The website is regularly updated with details of all society activities – these can be found via the Events page at www.bucksas.org.uk/events.html

Peter Marsden