BLHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009
& ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2009 Bedfordshire Local History Association Local History Conference will be held on Saturday the 13th June 2009 at the Village Hall, Clapham, hosted by Clapham Historical Society. As in previous years, the Conference will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting of the Bedfordshire Local History Association which will commence promptly at 9.30 am. No charge will be made for those who wish to attend the AGM only and are unable to stay for the conference. The details of the full programme and registration details has been issued to individual members and member societies and organisations.

After the completion of the AGM, the Conference will commence at 10.10 am.
A guided tour of the Glenn Miller museum and the war time airfield at Twinwood is on the agenda. This has now been greatly restored and improved and one could spend hours there but time will be limited, however, some may be tempted to make a further visit at a later date! The talks will include The Royal Aircraft Establishment, Bedford (a personal view); the Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire followed by personal Memories of a Land Girl; The Good Old Days by a local poacher and A Fire to Remember.

The Clapham Historical Society previously hosted the Conference in June 2001 and are delighted to have the opportunity to do so again this year, they hope you will join them for an enjoyable and interesting day with the promise of a delicious buffet lunch. Bookings must be made in advance to Mr. A. T. Foster, Narly Oak, The Baulk, Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford, MK41 6AA., together with the conference fee of £17.00 per delegate (includes lunch).

AILESBOURY MAUSOLEUM - 2009 OPENING DATES

Following the lead robbery from its roof, the Ailesbury Mausoleum and Crypt in the St. Mary's Churchyard, Maulden has now been fully repaired and will open to the public from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm on the following Sundays in 2009: - 14th June and 13th September. Guided tours throughout the opening to illustrate its and the family's history in Bedfordshire and the Royal Court. Entrance is free and the car park is adjacent to the churchyard.

WANTED!! ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION
IN "HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE"

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE urgently requires more articles to enable it to be published at regular intervals throughout the year. Bring the results of your own or your society's work to the attention of a wider audience. Articles around 1700 words, somewhat less if containing illustrations, will fill two pages but shorter articles are equally acceptable. Longer topics can be accommodated by splitting the article into parts and publishing them in consecutive issues. Society Secretaries if you wish to publicise a special event to a wider audience we will be happy to include it in our events page. We look forward to hearing from you. Next copy date for publication August 1st 2009, items for later publication are, of course, also welcome.
Ampthill Castle or Manor - a Brief Historical Outline

Kevan Fadden

The Ampthill & District Archaeological & Local History Society have been working on the history of Ampthill Castle which, it is believed, existed in what is now Ampthill Park on an impressive Greensand Ridge plateau overlooking the Bedford plain. This work has included a geophysical survey across the area of interest. The reputed site is marked by Katherine's Cross, a Gothic style monument erected in 1772 by Lord Ossory (who lived in Park House), in memory of Queen Catherine of Aragon who was detained in the castle in 1533 during her divorce proceedings by Cranmer's Court in Dunstable. The cross is said to have been placed on the site of what remained of the castle ruins following a major re-landscaping of the park by Lancelot "Capability" Brown.

The importance of the building was its association with Henry IV, V, VII and VIII and its use as a royal residence, a hunting lodge, and an administration centre for the Privy Council.

Existing records show a castle was built in the 1420's on the site by Sir John Cornwall who purchased the land following the death of Aymer Lord St. Amand in 1402, a descendent of the Norman D'albini family.

Cornwall, later created Lord Fanhope, was married to Henry IV's sister and was a hero at Agincourt (1415) where he fought under Henry V and became very rich from hostage money extracted from French nobility who were held at Ampthill. It is fair to suggest that Cornwall's importance and position in society, together with his extensive travelling on the Continent, influenced the quality and advanced design of the building. He died in 1443 and in 1454 Lord Edmond Grey of Wrest purchased the manor of Ampthill, including the castle and the park. Sir George Grey died at Ampthill Castle in 1503. By 1508 his son Richard, known as a "waster" was in serious debt through gambling and bad management. He forfeited the manor of Ampthill and the castle to King Henry VII. Henry VIII (ruling from 1509-1547 - 38 years) loved Ampthill and was frequently at the Castle throughout his reign.

In his survey of the Crown estates and castles c.1538 John Leland refers to a fine castle at Ampthill. However in subsequent records the term Manor House appears more frequently which may reflect the changes in use in the ensuing years.

The Society is attempting to untangle the apparent anomaly between Castle and Manor House and hope a small excavation in the future may resolve the problem. It is also expected locate the buildings precisely and evaluate what can be learned of Tudor life in particular.

As part of this investigation Mike Turner has transcribed the Accounts for the King's Manor of Ampthill 1533-1539 into modern English and they are available for viewing at the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Records Service, Bedford. He has also produced a summary of useful information from the accounts, which follows opposite.
Summary of the Information obtained from the Accounts for the King’s Manor of Ampthill 1533-1539

M. J. B. Turner

(His summary is based solely on the Accounts and takes no account of other sources of information, e.g. maps, plans and other recent interpretations)

There were three parks comprising the Manor of Ampthill. They were the Little Park, the Great Park and the New Park which was first mentioned in 1536.

The Little Park
In the Little Park there was a source of timber, a brick kiln and a lodge for the keeper of the Little Park. The lodge had glazed windows.

The Great Park
In the Great Park was the main manor house, generally referred to as the king’s lodge or lodging, comprising an inner court and an outer bass court, a great tower to the west, a bowling alley, a bowling house, the kings standing and the queens standing. There is mention of a well yard and a great well and also an orchard.

The rooms mentioned in the accounts are listed below, some names may refer to the same room:-
Kings great chamber, Kings chamber, Kings dining chamber, Kings banqueting chamber, Kings bedchamber, Kings privy chamber, Kings watching chamber, Kings jaques, Kings wardrobe, Kings buttery, Kings raying chamber
Queens great chamber, Queens chamber, Queens reaying chamber, Queens closet, Queens bedchamber, Queens watching chamber, Queens jaques
Chamber of presence
Chamber where the ladies and gentlewomen lie
Hall, Hall chamber
Waiting chamber
Lady Mary’s chamber
Butchhouse
Great kitchen, Privy kitchen, Petty kitchen
Scullery
Mr Norris chamber
Privy chamber
Chapel

Scole house
Lords privy stable jaques
Gatehouse
Porters ward

In the building complex there were lodgings for Mr Kingston and Mr Norris and the Lord Privy Seal. Starting in May 1537 at the lodge in the Great Park work began on a new hall, kitchen, larder, buttery and stable with 4 partitions above for 4 chambers also a new double chimney, an oven, a jaques and two new kennels for the keeper of the Great Park. A Mr Bryan, or Briant, is first mentioned in July 1537 in relation to the new kitchen and thereafter in relation to his new lodging. It seems likely that Mr Bryan is the keeper of the great park but this is not specifically stated.

The New Park
Starting in July 1536 work began on a new lodge in the New Park. It was to comprise a hall, parlour, buttery, larder, gallery, kitchen and 5 partitions to provide 5 chambers above for the keeper of the New Park. Carpentry work continued for at least a year. In July 1537 bricklayers were working on two double chimneys and plasterers were working there. In August the bricklayers were finishing the chimneys with a great oven and jaques. In September the partition between the hall and parlour was taken down to enlarge the hall. In October the carpenters were working on the frame for a two storey extension on the east side of the lodge which included a new parlour.

The Workers
The names of a large number of workers are given in the accounts. Somewhat surprisingly out of all the three hundred surnames there were only three Turners, two were blacksmiths and one a supplier of a pulley. There were three Smiths, two of whom were carpenters; and one a blacksmith. There were two Woodwards and one Wood, all sawyers. There was one Wright a labourer, one Bricklayer who was a bricklayer but there were none of the following trade associated surnames:- Carpenter, Mason, Tiler, Slater, Sawyer or Carter.
Chris Pickford, who worked in the Record Office from 1978 to 1998, has written to say that he is looking for "good homes" for a number of local history books and journals that he accumulated during his time in the County. Realistically, he says, it is now unlikely that he will complete any of his unfinished Bedfordshire projects as he is fully occupied with other researches. In any case, he hasn't made much use of his Bedfordshire books since completing the last of his four volumes on Bedfordshire Churches for BIHS in 2001. He is keen to downsize his library and feels that some of the books could well be of more use to others now.

Anyone interested in filling gaps in their own collections can contact Chris direct on 01384 878435 or by Email at c.pickford@talk21.com for a list - or just to ask for a particular title. There are some general titles on local and family history on offer as well as just the Bedfordshire material, which includes a number of parish history items.

Apart from one or two prize items that he's only prepared to part with at the going rate - including a bound set of the Bedfordshire Magazine complete with index - most will be available on a "make me an offer" basis. Chris plans to make a donation from any proceeds to the Carpet Museum Trust in Kidderminster for whom he set up an archive and trained a team of volunteers in 2004/7.

Chris also sends his greetings to all old friends in Bedfordshire. He has been working freelance since leaving the Church of England Record Centre in 2001 and is now doing more research and writing than archive work. He is just starting work on the revision of the "Pevsner" volume for Warwickshire, working closely with Charles O'Brien who is doing the revision for Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.

**New Publications**


Since the dawn of the railway age, a fascinating mixture of lines have criss-crossed the counties of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire. They range from narrow gauge examples, such as the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway and Whipsnade Zoo's "Jumbo Express", constructed for both commercial and tourism purposes, to main trunk routes. Such lines commence at London's Kings Cross, Euston and St Pancras stations, that first came to public attention during the glorious era of steam and which remain as steadfast today, solid planks within the modern railway network. This book also features some that have survived closure scares, and which remain in use. The most well known lines of this type are the "Abney Flyer" route between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey, and that between Bedford and Bletchley. There are others that have fallen before the march of the internal combustion engine, but which live on as public footpaths, accessible to all, prominent amongst these being the former lines between Wolverton and Newport Pagnell, and Watford to Rickmansworth. A number of heritage railway centres and museums are also described, each with their own special characteristics, for example the long lived Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. The story is also told of one of the longest-lived national organisations catering for the "gricer", this being the Locomotive Club of Great Britain. A fascinating selection of photographs add a further dimension to this treasure-trove of the railway world, past and present.

Murray Eckett was born in 1964 and has been interested in trains and railways from an early age. Railways play a large part in Murray's working life, in his capacity as a trains spares buyer for Metronet Rail. Since 1986, he has been carrying out voluntary work on behalf of the Locomotive club of Great Britain.

**HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE** is published by the **BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

Editor: Brian D. Lazelle.
Springfield, 63, Ampthill Road, Maulden, Bedford, MK45 2DII.
Telephone: (01525) 402264.

Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to the above address, together with a stamped addressed envelope if the contribution is to be returned. Contributions may be in any readable form, including on IBM compatible disc. If the latter is employed please consult the editor before despatch to avoid compatibility problems.

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