ITS OFFICIAL !! England’s newest county association, the **BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION** was formally inaugurated on the 15th. of May 1993 at Woburn Abbey.

In the pleasant surroundings of the Lantern Room the gathering was welcomed by Ms. Lavinia Wellicome the Abbey’s Curator on behalf of the Marquis of Tavistock. The Marquis regretted that he could not be present in person but had expressed delight that the Abbey had been chosen for the inaugural meeting of the new county association particularly because of the Abbey’s premier position in Bedfordshire and its important place in farming history.

Martin Lawrence, Chairman of the Steering Committee, reported on the actions taken by the committee since its election last October and Peter Wood, Honorary Treasurer, gave details of the accounts. There followed a discussion on the draft constitution and a number of amendments were incorporated. The constitution in this form was then accepted as the initial document on which to inaugurate the Association. The Chairman promised that the other points on the constitution which had not been acted on would be submitted to the new Executive Committee for further consideration. The formation of the Association was then approved and the Executive Committee elected. The committee members are as follows:-

Martin Lawrence, Chairman; Joan Curran, Secretary; Peter Wood, Treasurer; Stephen Colema; Michael Kemp; Brian Lazelle; Pamela Ormerod; Norman Parry; Michael Pope; Rex Skinner and Linda Swain.

The new body has been constituted to promote the advancement of local history within the County. Its membership consists of local history societies, corporate bodies, individuals, and other groups interested in the local history of Bedfordshire. Individual members interested in local studies who have no local society in their neighbourhood are particularly welcome.

Among the aims of the new body are the following:-

a) to promote the study of local history within the County.

b) to improve the communication between the local societies and the broader historical network.

c) to provide for the exchange of views, news and other information between the membership, the publication of a regular newsletter being central to this aim.

d) to organise County events such as conferences, one day educational workshops, exhibitions etc.

e) to provide information and assistance to its membership in the furtherance of the study of local history.

Such activities will be designed to complement, enhance but not to conflict with those of member societies.

The annual membership fees of the new Association are £10 for societies, corporate bodies and other groups, and £5 for individuals. Membership applications should be sent to the Honorary Treasurer, Bedfordshire Local History Association, 14, Glebe Ave., Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1HS.

The inaugural address entitled "The Past in the Present" given by Dr. Joan Thirsk (President of the Kent Local History Association) proved an inspiring opening event for the new body. Dr. Thirsk explored the history of farming with particular references to Bedfordshire and nearby Eastern Counties, suggesting that historians could enlighten farmers in their present problems. Dr. Thirsk highlighted the recurrent problems in the fortunes of those working the land from the fourteenth century until this century and compared them to the

*Cont. on page 2 column 1*
present day problems in the farming industry. The causes varied widely, the Black Death, the end of the Civil War, imports from the Antipodes and America etc., but the action taken and the choice of crops to effect change sound strangely familiar today. She concluded that the lesson to be learnt is not in the mega-solution favoured by the economists but local specialist plans to suit the area with attention to small things in great detail.

NOTE: It will assist the committee if the persons who raised queries on the constitution at the Inaugural Meeting would contact the Honorary Secretary, 7, Castle Close, Tottenhoe, Dunstable, Beds., LU6 1GJ, with a resume of the query to ensure it is given full consideration by the new Executive Committee. As a result of comments to the Executive Committee since the meeting it has been decided that prior to future elections potted biographies of the candidates will be available provided nominations are made in time.

EXHIBITION:- LOCAL HISTORY - PUBLISHED & UNPUBLISHED

Make a note in your diary now! The first major event of the Bedfordshire Local History Association will be the EXHIBITION to be held on Saturday the 25th of September 1993 from 2pm. until 5pm. in the Village Hall, Houghton Conquest. This will be an opportunity for Societies and others to display their recent work (and sell their publications), whether finished or unfinished, to members and the general public. The hall will be available, with tables, for the setting up of exhibits from 1pm. Please book your space as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. Further details from the Honorary Secretary. Please give this event your full support, whether exhibiting or not, to make this first event of your Association a resounding success.

CERTIFICATE COURSE IN LOCAL HISTORY

The University of Cambridge Board of Continuing Education is running a new Certificate course in English Local History at Letchworth Settlement, Nevilles Rd, Letchworth on Tuesday evenings from 7.00 to 9.00 pm, 1993-95 starting on the 28th. of September. The objects of the course are to provide a knowledge of the principle sources of local history with particular references to Eastern England; to provide instruction in the techniques necessary for using those sources; to give guidance in the critical interpretation of sources and writing up results; to set the study of local history in its regional and national background. The first year of 30 two-hour meetings, once a week will cover the general historical introduction to the medieval period (down to the early 16th. century). It will include practical sessions studying medieval documents in the form of facsimiles, transcripts and translations. An intensive weekend course will be held in April '94 to concentrate on paleography, transcription and the form of documents. Fees for the first year will be £195 (payable in two instalments). The second year fees are guaranteed not to rise by more than 5%. Fees cover copies of documents and the loan of books. Further details from the Registrar, Board of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge, CB3 8AQ.
CONGRATULATIONS!
TO THE BCRO ITS THEIR 80TH. ANNIVERSARY

Local historians in the county regularly report their appreciation of the research facilities provided by the Bedfordshire County Record Office and the kindness, patience and expertise of its staff. In the year of the formation of the Bedfordshire Local History Association, it is fitting to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of our Record Office, the oldest in England and Wales, and to consider its origins and early history.

The Local Government Act of 1888 set up County Councils, which took over the duties previously performed by nominated Justices of the Peace. For example, the control of the police was transferred to the Standing Joint Committee of the Quarter Sessions and the County Council. Bedfordshire, together with other counties, were given the custody of the Quarter Sessions archives and responsibility for their safe keeping. To commence the operation of putting the records in order, a County Records Committee was established in 1897.

Over the next ten years public funds were allocated to the task of arranging and repairing documents. The work was carried out under the supervision of Messrs. Hardy & Page, the London record agents. These efforts culminated in the publication of three volumes of extracts from the "Bedfordshire County Records" in 1907-1911. However enthusiasm began to wane at this point and matters came to a temporary halt.

A breakthrough came with the appointment of Dr. G. H. Fowler, a retired marine zoologist, as chairman of the Records Committee in October 1913. An enthusiast and innovator, he immediately laid plans for improvements to the muniment room, admission of research students and the deposit of local as well as county records. An assistant was appointed to work on the archives. The Bedfordshire County Records Office had come into being.

Dr. Fowler brought a scientific approach and many organisational skills to the project and there soon emerged a model record office run by a local authority. Dr. Fowler distilled this experience into "The Care of County Muniments", which was published in 1923. It was an important stimulus for a number of County Councils who were considering setting up their own record office.

1923 was also the year in which F. G. Emmison was appointed as trainee Clerk of the Records. He was later to become the first Essex County Archivist in 1938 and an eminent local historian and genealogist. During the 1920's, he embarked upon his survey of the Bedfordshire parish registers, visiting each parish on a bicycle on Saturday afternoons to list the documents kept in the church and parsonage. As a result, he had considerable success in securing the deposit of parish poor law and settlement papers, many of which were in an advanced state of deterioration.

These pioneers of good practice lay the foundations for 80 years of public service. Joyce Godber, Patricia Bell and Chris Pickford the successive County Archivists have, together with their staff, built upon these early achievements. The Bedfordshire Records Office is a treasure trove for local historians which cannot be valued too highly and should not be taken for granted.

The Executive Committee of the Bedfordshire Local History Association wish the Bedfordshire County Record Office a very happy 80th. birthday. Long may they thrive.

MARTIN LAWRENCE.

The above article was based upon information supplied by Chris Pickford, County Archivist, to whom we are most grateful.
NEW PUBLICATIONS


Traces the settlement and economy of the town from the earliest recorded arrival of people in the area to the present day. It contains dozens of photographs some in colour plus specially drawn maps and pictures.


Relates tales from history of Beds., Bucks. & Northants. through three centuries including The Princes in the Tower, the Gunpowder Plot and the Great Train Robbery, along with many other local people, crimes and customs. Illustrated with 60 specially taken photographs. All royalties from this book will go to the Willen Hospice.


Traces its history from the Select Committee of 1807, its opening for criminal lunatics and paupers in 1812 and throughout its use as an asylum including the social and economic relationships.

PERIODICALS

Bedfordshire Magazine, edited by Betty Chambers A5, 4 per annum, ISSN 0005-7592, £2.25ea. or 2 year subscription £18.00 from the publisher, White Crescent Press, Crescent Rd., Luton, Beds., LU2 0AG.

Articles on Bedfordshire life past and present illustrated with photographs and drawings. It includes book reviews and letters. This excellent magazine which has served the County so well for many years needs to increase its circulation to survive, it deserves your support.

The Local Historian. A5, 4 per annum. Local History News. A5, 4 per annum. Both are published by and included in the membership of the British Association for Local History, Shopwyke Manor Barn, Chichester, PO20 6BG. Annual subscription £15.00.

The local Historian has articles for the general reader of wide, sometime national, application or specific local subject. Emphasis is on applying principles and method to local research and study. There is a wide ranging review section.

Local History News has up to date news.

Local History Magazine. A4, 6 per annum. £2.00 ea. or £12 for a year's subscription from the publishers Susan & Robert Howard, 3, Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2DS.

Contains news of Local Societies, Record Offices, Conferences, courses and activities nationwide together with articles on varied local history subjects. Reviews or lists publications from local societies and other sources.

Bedfordshire Record Office News Letter. Editor Nigel Lutt. ISSN 0951-8911.

A4. Free collected or £3 per annum from the publishers The County Record Office, County Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP.

Details of new acquisitions and other Record Office news together with articles on Bedfordshire Local History usually inspired by the archival material available at Bedford.

Bedfordshire Family History Journal. Editor Mrs J. Furminger.

A4. 4 per annum. Published by Bedfordshire Family History Society, free to its members or Journal only subscription £6.00 per annum from Mrs. P. Ormerod, 7, Brasside, Bedford, MK41 9BL.

News for family historians together with articles on local history with particular emphasis on genealogy.

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