FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 1994

Dr. Mark Bailey who is Staff Tutor in Local History Studies, Board of Continuing Education, Cambridge will address the Association on the above subject at 2.30pm in the Elgar Room of the Weatherley Centre, Eagle Farm Road, Biggleswade. Directions to the centre are enclosed with this newsletter. Dr. Bailey's mandate from the University is to make local history "interesting and accessible to everybody" and therefore we can expect an enlightening afternoon whatever our individual interest or skills. Admission will be free.

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at 2.00pm at Chicksands Priory. It will be followed by a talk by Dr. Margaret Bonney, Editor of the Local Historian, the journal of the British Association for Local History. The talk will be entitled WRITING AND PUBLICATION OF LOCAL HISTORY IN THE 1990'S.
The official agenda for the meeting will be circulated to the membership nearer the date.

The festival is being held at Shuttleworth and sponsored by W. Jordan & Son (Biggleswade) Ltd. and Charles Wells Ltd. The theme will be Bedfordshire in the 1920's. Appropriate costume will be worn by the exhibitors. As mentioned in the last issue of History in Bedfordshire the BLHA has arranged for an area to be allocated to Local History and we now learn that this will be in the main hall of the College. This will be an ideal opportunity to bring the BLHA and its affiliated Societies to the attention of a wider audience and we hope that you will take the opportunity to give your support. If you wish to exhibit please contact Ken Page on 0767 312330 or Martin Lawrence on 0525 874033 who are kindly acting as the BLHA's co-ordinators for this event. Space may be limited as the hall will be shared with another interest group and it may be necessary, dependant on your response, to allocate space to different Societies on different days, so let our co-ordinators know your requirements as soon as you can.

This year's Mid-Beds. Local History Conference will be hosted by MAYPOLE HERITAGE in Ickwell Village Hall from 10.00am till 4.00pm. The title of the conference will be EXPLORING A VILLAGE 'a practical Workshop'.
The morning session will commence with an introduction by Dr. M Bailey and the delegates will then split into prearranged interest groups to explore various aspects of the village. Following lunch there will be an opportunity to examine relevant documents, photographs etc. prior to a group discussion.
The conference will be open to nominated delegates from local history societies and official bodies, the cost will be £5 per delegate which will include lunch. Contact Mr. Alan Bigg, Old Queens Head, 3, Sand Lane, Northill, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 9AD. The Mid-Bedfordshire Local History Conference has been organised, for the past four years, by an informal liaison of Mid-Bedfordshire Societies. This year the group is extending it's invitation to other local history groups in Bedfordshire.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Extraordinary General Meeting to consider the clarifications to the Constitution, proposed as a result of the representations at and since the Inaugural General Meeting, was held on 22nd. Jan. 1994. Regrettably insufficient members were present to form the quorum required for the formal voting procedures to be carried out.

However, a great deal of time was taken by those present to examine and refine the proposed changes and on reaching agreement they referred the final text back to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee proposes to place the modified constitution before the A.G.M. in May for ratification.

We wish all our readers a happy and prosperous 1994
STEAM ON ROAD AND FIELD IN EAST BEDS.

by Ken Page

Most of you will have attended Steam Engine Rallies and seen immaculate steam engines dashing about the arena. Working engines (apart from Showmen's - more later), were not at all like that. They were kept well oiled and in working order, but had to earn their living and time was not wasted on painting and polishing. With the local Ivel and Sanderson tractors in use from 1903 it is a wonder that steam survived for so long, in fact, right up to the 1940's. Steam tractors and direct ploughing were tried out from time to time, but they were not as efficient as petrol or oil engines.

Various makers supplied steam engines locally, including: Burrell of Thetford, Foster and Clayton & Shuttleworth of Lincoln, John Fowler and McLaren of Leeds, Aveling & Porter of Rochester, Marshall of Gainsborough. There were many more manufacturers throughout the United Kingdom.

The common types of steam power operating in East Bedfordshire were:-

PLOUGHING TACKLE. Consisted of two powerful engines with cables pulling a plough, cultivator or mole drainer backwards and forwards across the field. At least three men were involved, one on each engine and one on the tackle. It took two men to drive each engine on the roads.

THRESHING TACKLE. A general purpose engine with a threshing drum, elevator (jack straw) or chaff cutter was used.

TRACTION ENGINES. For general duties such as haulage and sawing of wood. Some were fitted with a crane or winding equipment for pulling up trees etc.

STATIONERY STEAM ENGINES. These were used by farmers and contractors for threshing, sawing or raising steam where motive power was not important. They could be hauled around by horses or tractors.

The largest operators in this district were T. B. Kitchener & Co. of Potton who used their own foundry and works to repair and maintain a whole range of equipment. When the business was sold in 1927 (the year before I was born), they had three sets of Fowler BB compound 16 hp ploughing engines with plough, cultivator, living van and water cart, in addition to five sets of Fowler 12 & 14 hp engines with tackle. Also in use were harrows, mole drainers, clover hullers and pond dredgers. There were a further ten sets of traction engines and threshing tackle and just one steam roller, in all, 27 steam engines.

In Biggleswade, Charles Taylor operated from his premises in the Baulk as an agricultural machinist. When he sold up in 1918, there were eight complete sets of threshing tackle, 50 tons of steel plate, blacksmiths and boilermakers tools in about 2000 lots. Eli Deamer purchased the business, which later passed to Percy Kidman who also owned Sunderland Farm, where I used to watch the ploughing engines at work near to my father's market garden land.

In 1937, Reginald Kendall farmed 500 acres at Dunton and his brother William farmed 1,100 acres. There was a report in the Biggleswade Chronicle about their ploughing engines which were converted to diesel two years previously. They were very pleased to save washing out boilers for half a day every fortnight and the motors started immediately. With steam it was necessary to light the fire and wait for steam pressure to rise. The engines were 1914 Fowler BB1 of 16 hp. They were steamed to Leeds in 1935 and converted to diesel power by McLarens. Cylinders and chimney were removed and a massive diesel engine was fixed on top.

The noise of a ploughing set, steaming down Toplars Hill was almost unbelievable, with two engines weighing over 10 tons each and pulling a plough, cultivator, living van, water cart etc. between them, all on iron wheels rattling, with gears whining and pistons chugging. The marks they made on the road stayed for weeks. I lived in Drove Road, near to Eagle Farm and there was always plenty of time to wait and see them pass. If the engines were returning to Kidman's Yard they travelled along London Road to the Baulk as there was not enough space to negotiate the Hop Bine corner. If they were noisy, Kendall's were even louder with the added roar of two diesel engines.

Biggleswade Urban District Council used a 15 ton Aveling & Porter steam roller, which often parked at Eagle Farm and I watched them steam up in the morning. Walter Clark the driver had only one arm, having lost the other in the motion of a threshing engine, pulled in by a loose shirt sleeve.

The really smart and well kept engines were owned by travelling showmen and I watched a number of these at work. One day I remember well, was when I saw the three Foster engines 'Britannia', 'Dreadnought' and 'Admiral Beatty' owned by William Thurston & Sons each pulling three trailers and a water dandy. Their loads were the 'Dodgems', 'Jollity Farm' and the 'Thriller' swirl ride. It was a very impressive sight, with the three sets travelling along London Road at about 8 mph and relatively quiet on solid rubber tyres. In fact, when they were stationary, generating electricity at the fair in Fergusons Meadow, they were almost silent. The other engines I knew well were Burrells, 'Victory', 'Alexandra' and 'King Edward VII' owned by Charles Thurston & Sons, who came to Market Square every October. In 1938 on their last visit, the steam engines were replaced by two Armstrong Saurer diesel tractors. Our local showmen James Harris & Sons had a Foster 'Surprise' and a McLaren steam tractor 'Lord Lascelles' often seen at the fairs in the town and through the winter in the Royal Oak Yard.

Heavy haulage firms such as Pickfords and E. W. Rudd used as many as three steam road locomotives to pull heavy loads along the Great North Road. Usually, Fowler 8 hp Lions were used. Two were pulling and one hitched behind for extra braking power. These, however, were later replaced by

continued on page 3 column 1.
BCRO, Charter Marks & Local Government Reorganisation

Bedfordshire County Records Office has been awarded a Charter Mark for excellence in public service. This was one out of 93 awarded by the Government nationally in 1993 (a total of four came to this County). Those of us who use the services of the BCRO know that this is a well-deserved award for, what must be, the most user friendly records office in the country. Chris Pickford and his staff give a very willing, efficient and expert service to a very varied clientele. The Association congratulates them on their success in achieving this further recognition of their worth.

It is ironic that the Charter Mark has been received at a time when the future of the County Records Office in its present form is not at all clear, indeed it may be at some risk, in light of the Local Government Review at present in progress. Whatever final form the new Unitary Authorities take the pressure on funds will be greatly increased and whether the fight for a share of funding for the BCRO is across two or three Authorities or across departments within one larger Authority the maintenance of adequate funding will be tough going. A way must be found, within the final arrangements for Unitary Authorities, to make statutory provision for maintaining the archive service covering the present area within the County and funding it adequately. If the funding is shared between Authorities then binding long term arrangements are necessary.

If you are concerned about the long term future of this service, you have only until the end of February to make your views known. Write direct to the East Midlands Area Review Team, Local Government Commission for England, Dolphin Court, 10-11 Great Turnstile, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC1V 7JU. Write also to your MP relating your concerns in this matter.

STEAM continued from page 2 column 2

Steamsmell tractors.

Local brewers and millers used steam wagons, usually Fodens, with a trailer carrying up to 16 tons. Wells & Winch and Franklin of Biggleswade, Simpson's Brewery of Baldock and Bowman's Mill at Hitchin are the ones I remember.

The main problem with steam traction was water and fuel, coal had to be available. In the case of threshing contractors, the hirer supplied coal and water. The engines required frequent water replenishment and it was the case of finding a river, stream or ditch and putting down a hose to suck up water or, in towns, of knowing where to find a water hydrant.

Steam engines lingered on during the 1939/45 war, but as surplus military vehicles became available and with the advent of cheap farm tractors such as Fordson and Allis Chambers, the heavy equipment became a liability and was scrapped. A few people like George Cushing of Thursford bought up and stored old engines, but the majority were never used again.

New Publications

THE STORY OF BIGGLESWADE BREWERY by Ken Page. sb. £3.50 (£4.00 post free UK direct from author). Pub. Ken Page, 6, Pine Close, Biggleswade, Beds., SG18 0EF. The story of Biggleswade Brewery from 1764 to 1993, with photographs and illustrations.

PAVENHAM - The Lifestory of a Village by Rachel Marchbank. £7.95 (UK post & packing £1.50) Pub. Friends of St Peter, Pavenham (to whom all proceeds are donated) 60, The Bury, Pavenham, Bedford, MK43 7PY. The book, for the first time, draws together under one cover the many strands of history that have shaped this traditional English village. Starting from the Jurassic period of geological time, it describes the making of the landscape and tells the story of its inhabitants from prehistoric times to the present day.

IMAGES OF OLD OFFLEY by Angela Hillyard. £9.50 (£1.00 post and packing UK direct from author). The photographs, that are the heart of this book, have been collected from the inhabitants of Offley and include a collection of Lantern Slides taken between 1900 and 1925 by Reverend E. P. Gatty.

DISCOVERING PREHISTORIC ENGLAND Edited By James Dyer. £6.95. Pub. Shire. This pocket edition brings together information on prehistoric sites previously published in the Discovering Regional Archaeology series written by various authors. The opportunity has been taken to update the known information on the sites and to revise their locations into the modern county boundaries (perhaps not such a good idea in light of the yet to come Unitary Authorities, ed.). The book covers the sites of earliest man to immediately before the Roman Conquest and each site is described and its OS reference given. The introduction includes a description of all types of sites and puts those listed into context. This book is well illustrated with photographs and succeeds in removing the mystique that often surrounds this subject. It is especially valuable to the reader with little or no archaeological knowledge.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributors required for a series of short articles depicting the development of some particular aspect of your village or town for publication in History in Bedfordshire. Articles should be around 1000 words in length and preferably the result of recent research by the contributor or his group.
In our last issue we commenced our potted biographies of the Association's Executive Committee members to make them familiar to you, here are a few more. The remainder will be in the next issue.

NORMAN PARRY - COMMITTEE MEMBER
Norman Parry was a founder member of the Potton History Society and its Chairman for sixteen years. He is active in Society projects and is at present researching land usage and in particular the 18th. and 19th. Century enclosure acts. He has represented the Potton History Society on the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council for a number of years. He occasionally gives talks on subjects related to Potton.

STEPHEN COLEMAN - COMMITTEE MEMBER
Stephen Coleman has lived in Bedfordshire since 1979, he is currently the Historic Environmental Information Officer in the Bedfordshire County Council's Planning Department. He has been a committee member of the Bedford Archaeological and Local History Society since 1980 and was formerly Secretary of the Council For British Archaeology's South Midlands Group. His major interests include landscape history: he has researched the topographical development of several Bedfordshire parishes, some of which have been published. He is currently a committee member of the Mediaeval Settlement Group.

REX SKINNER - COMMITTEE MEMBER.
Rex Skinner was born in Sandy, he became interested in local history after leaving school (he admits that school taught history had no appeal). He is a member of the Biggleswade History Society in which he has played an active part since the 1970's and has been a member of a small team researching information for their publications. He is currently Vice Chairman of the Society.

MICHAEL POPE - COMMITTEE MEMBER.
Michael Pope's appreciation of History as a living subject commenced when taking a Congregational Union Lay Preachers Course in which Church History figured prominently. He was thrilled by the story of the emerging Non-conformity peopled by the Barrowists and Brownists and followers of John Bunyan; history had come alive. Since then, spurred by his daughter's O-level researches into part of the family (The Bunyan Family of Clifton Hundred), he has dug deeply into his family history including the past of the Popes, Scrases, Antells, Greens, Penberthys and Fowles. In Bedfordshire he is a member of the Toddington Historical Society and of the Toddington Baptist Church, whose history goes back to 1816. He is currently researching Census Returns for information about people who are named in the church books.

BRIAN LAZELLE - COMMITTEE MEMBER & EDITOR OF HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE.
After graduating in Engineering, Brian Lazelle followed a career in the Aircraft Industry, the last 20 years in senior management. His interest in history was kindled at school, not by the formal history lessons but by the English Literature Master's inspired teaching of the works of great British writers and their times. Brian Lazelle moved to Bedfordshire in 1959 and was a founder member of the Ampthill & District Archaeological & Local History Society in 1962. He has served on its committee for most of its existence, initially as Secretary and then as Vice-Chairman. He currently combines the Vice-Chairman's role with that of Publishing Officer. He has represented the A. & D. A. & L. H. S. on the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council since 1965 and was that body's treasurer for over 20 years. He is co-author of FLITWICK - A VANISHING VILLAGE and is currently researching the history of Maulden.