FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 1995

UNIVERSITY of LUTON and LOCAL HISTORY. — Saturday 18th. February 1995.

Dr. Stephen Bunker from the Faculty of Humanities, Luton University will address the Association on the above subject in the Village Hall, Flitwick Road, Maulden, Beds. on February the 18th. next commencing at 2.15 p.m. Luton is one of the newest universities and it will be interesting to hear details of their approach to local history.

Part of Dr. Bunkers talk will discuss oral history which has been highlighted recently by the ‘Nationwide’ competition announced in the July issue of HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE. In our researches into the past it is easy to overlook the contemporary local history of our region. Despite the comprehensive coverage by the modern all pervading media it is surprising what detail of living in the past decades are being lost. For example, recorded interviews with immigrant workers describing their memories of Bedfordshire life, it’s joys and problems, after their recruitment to work in the brick industry would be a valuable insight into our times. Another fast changing area, that demands more detailed recording of the effects on the lives of the local population, is market gardening in mid-Bedfordshire. The actual voices or in the case of video the ‘presence’ of the interviewee adds another valuable dimension to the record.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 1995

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on May 13th. 1995 at Bromham Mill, Bromham. Full details will be given in the January issue of HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE. After the formal business of the AGM, provisional arrangements have been made for Margaret Gelling of the Ancient History and Archaeology department of the University of Birmingham to address the Association on PLACE NAMES AND THE LANDSCAPE IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

NEW CURATOR FOR BEDFORDSHIRE MUSEUMS

Museums in Bedfordshire have received a boost with the appointment of the county’s first museums development officer.

Jason Doherty has worked previously at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and at Museums in Nottingham. He said: “Bedfordshire has a rich and varied history and I am looking forward to working with museums and other groups to help promote the county’s heritage”.

Bedfordshire Museums does not run a museum itself, but assists other museums and heritage groups with information, advice and training. The organization is supported by all five local authorities in the county, and on a more general level helps promote the cause of museums to decision makers across the region.

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE understands that Jason’s terms of reference are to raise the profile of museums within the County, to assist the museums in their work, to help develop new museums and to bring museum services to areas not previously covered.

LOCAL SOCIETIES

We would like to publish more news from local societies in HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE. Our space is limited so we have not room to list the programmes from each society and, in any case, this requirement is covered in the very useful Local History Bulletin issued quarterly by Barry Stephenson from Bedford Central Library. This also keeps us up to date with their new acquisitions. If your society has a particular keynote lecture or special event planned for next year which you consider would be of interest to others beyond your normal radius of influence and you wish to attract a wider audience let HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE know and we will include details in the forthcoming issues. A list of member societies and contact addresses is printed on page 4.
THE BEDFORDSHIRE FESTIVAL

Peter Wood

Over the three days of the August Bank Holiday W. Jordan (Cereals) Ltd. and Charles Wells Ltd. sponsored a Festival held in the grounds of Shuttleworth College with a theme of the 20's and 30's. The weekend was blessed with good weather and over 38,000 people visited the site which included the Swiss Garden and the Shuttleworth Collection of Old Aircraft.

Bedfordshire Local History Association was well represented in the Russell Hall which was devoted to local history, together with complementary exhibits depicting the history of the Post Office, Health and Safety at Work and O-gauge model railways. A number of member local and county history societies exhibited included societies from Ampthill, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Harlington, Stotfold, Toddington and the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society. The County Record Office was also represented. Each society had found a way of depicting the era in an individual way and the various displays aroused a lot of interest. I certainly had many interesting conversations with local people during my time on the Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society’s stand.

Apart from the Bedfordshire Local History Association’s members display, there was a wide selection of other things to see and do in the grounds and buildings of the historic house and many of the craftsmen, entertainers, stall holders and visitors were dressed in appropriate costume. The Festival reflected the great diversity of occupations and leisure activities in Bedfordshire and while it is impossible to mention all the displays, having been in finance all my working life, one that stood out was that of George Hay & Co. who had recreated an Accountant’s office of the period with old ledgers, documents, pens etc. and no sign of today’s technology.

A village square had been built depicting shops and businesses as you would have seen them 70 years ago. Apart from the Accountants there was a greengrocers and sweet shop together with Jordan’s mill shop and a working bakery by Gunns the Bakers. The adjoining tea-room did a roaring trade.

The MGM Picturedrome was situated in the Lecture Theatre and as well as showing films there was a display of cinema nostalgia in the entrance together with a commissioner in full uniform. The County’s connection with agriculture was shown in a demonstration area which included many examples of period farming machinery and hand tools etc.

All in all the Festival appeared to be a great success and it is hoped that the idea will be repeated in the not too distant future.

A STROLL AROUND LEIGHTON BUZZARD

Members of the Bedfordshire Local History Association from across the County enjoyed a perambulation around the ancient market town of Leighton Buzzard on Sunday October 16th last. Stephen Coleman (Heritage Group, County Planning Department.) led the tour assisted by June Masters and Maureen Brown. Stephen demonstrated how medieval town planning had caused the township to grow around the market place established by the Lord of the Manor. This market place had been established where roads from the important towns met to cross the river to increase the value of the Lord’s holding by drawing the merchants to set up establishments there. No records have yet been found to establish the date of formation of the market place but Stephen suggested that if it occurred before 1164 it would have been during the King’s ownership of the Manor, if after then the Abbey of Fontevraud would have been responsible. The long narrow sites of each holding around the market clearly bore witness to the high value of frontage onto a thriving market, the large number of hostelries adjacent confirmed the success of the enterprise.

On completion of the walk the members adjourned to the Assembly Hall of Leighton Middle School for tea followed by a talk on the history of education in Leighton Buzzard by Maggi Stannard. Maggi described the early schools of the town, giving a particularly graphic description of the regime in the Lancastrian school established in Victorian times, maybe some modern teachers will envy their practice of hauling miscreants to the rafters in wicker baskets to remain there for the rest of the day.

= Readers Letters

Sir,

Could I, through your news letter, ask for help from your members in a survey of small World War II defensive sites.

I am undertaking a survey of pill-boxes (mainly) but also of anti-aircraft gun sites, anti-tank obstacles, Home-guard gun positions etc. on behalf of the Bedfordshire Historic Record at County Hall.

Although there is a list of such features, I am sure it is incomplete and as local people knew of such sites in their area, perhaps they would be willing to help me in letting me know of the locations in their area. I can then carry out a survey of the structure (if standing) or a ground survey (if demolished).

I can be contacted on 0767 260287 most days.

Any help in this matter would be much appreciated.

Trevor Ball.
BUILDING THE PEACE
VE-Day and beyond.

An opportunity to participate in a museum exhibition in Bedfordshire.

1995 will be the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and will be marked by the culmination of six years of commemoration of the events of those years.

For 1995, Bedfordshire Museums are organising a touring exhibition to focus on VE Day and its aftermath, and the impact of the events of the immediate post-war period on Bedfordshire and its people.

The exhibition will focus on issues such as; the celebrations surrounding the end of the war, demobilisation and returning from overseas, austerity and the rebuilding of the economy, the great social changes of the post war period, and conclude with a look at Bedfordshire's role within Europe today.

A feature of the exhibition will be its ability to be displayed in towns and villages across the county - provided a suitable venue can be found. To make the exhibition directly relevant to these communities, Bedfordshire Museums are inviting Local History Groups to participate in researching and writing the exhibition, with the aim of producing a section on their own community.

If you would like to know more about this project and how your group can become involved, contact Jason Doherty at Bedfordshire Museums, c/o Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford MK40 3XD.

THE WAY TO SCHOOL

If you were present at Maggi Stannard's interesting talk on the history of the Leighton Buzzard Schools or if you were unable to attend, and wish to know more about those fascinating times you will be interested to know that Maggi's book is still available as detailed below:-

The Way to School by Maggi Stannard.

This book is of particular value to those interested in the battle between the development of education and child employment in the nineteenth century. The presence, in that period, of a Lancastrian school in the village makes it doubly so. The author takes us through the history of the Lancastrian, British, Board and other schools in the town. Particular attention is paid to the working conditions under which the children were employed in the community.

Publications
New or reissued.

Bedfordshire's Yesteryears Vol. 2. by Brenda Fraser-Newstead.
To bring a taste of the twentieth century the author has collated the recollections of a wide variety of the longest surviving local residents in her second volume. This volume concentrates on country and farm life, containing many glimpses of a way of life that has radically changed over a period of two world wars and of great sociological and technological transformations as seen through the eyes of those who experienced and shaped it.

Dunstable with the Priory by Vivienne Evans.
The author describes how Henry 1's advisers planted a market on the edge of his 'household manor', Houghton Regis. A royal palace was added and a few years later Henry invited a house of Augustinian Canons from London to build a new priory adjacent. Throughout the period up to 1550 the town, Dunstable, that grew around around that market played an important part in national life.

This book presents an attractive and interesting picture of Flitwick as it was between 1880 and the 1920s, when the roads were often dirt tracks and children played in the streets. the visual tour round the village takes us to the well known features - church, chapels, manor, school, railway station and pubs. as well as more humble dwellings. We meet the ordinary villagers at home, at school, at work or worship and at play.

Journeys into Bedfordshire by Anthony Mackay.
This excellent collection of over 150 ink drawings depicting the buildings and landscape of Bedfordshire has been redesigned into a new handy format. Every corner of the county has been explored in search of material, and although the choice is a personal one, the resulting collection represents a unique record of the environment today.

Folk. Characters and events in the history of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire by Vivienne Evans.
The result of much original research from a wide variety of sources, the author gathers together a host of local characters, eminent and humble, worthy and notorious, demonstrating the unchanging variation and unpredictability of human nature.
LOCAL SOCIETIES NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Local Societies are the lifeblood of local history, they are the meeting place for like minded people, they generate interest in local history in their areas and encourage research into and preservation of our heritage. If you are not yet a member of your local group, go along this winter and meet some interesting people. Listed below are local groups who are members of the BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION.

Amphill & District Archaeological & Local History Society. Mr. P. J. Wood, 14, Glebe Avenue, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1HS2.

Bedford Archaeological & Local History Society. Dr. I. P. Freeman, 8, Vicarage Close, Ravensden, Bedford, MK44 2RW.

Bedfordshire Family History Society. Mr. R. Selden, 8, Nightingale Avenue, Bedford. MK41 7JB.

Bedfordshire Historical Record Society. Mrs. B. Chambers, 50, Shefford Road, Meppershall, Beds. SG17 5LL.

Biggleswade History Society. Mr. K. H. Page, 6, Pine Close, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 0EP.

The Book Castle. Mr. P. Bowes, 12, Church Street, Dunstable, Beds. LU5 4RU.

Caddington Local History Society. Mr. F. F. G. Sutton, 49, The Crescent, Caddington, Luton, Beds. LU1 4HZ.

Carlington and Flitlington Historical Society. Mr. J. Dancy, 3, High Street, Carlton, Bedford. MK43 7JX.

Clapham Historical Society. Mrs. M. Foster, Narly Oak, The Baulk, Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford, MK41 6AA.

Dunstable and District Local History Society. Mr. J. B. Stevens, 12, Friars Walk, Dunstable. LU6 3JA.

Flitwick Local History Society. Ms. A. Slack, Flitwick Library, Coniston Road, Flitwick, Bedford. MK45 1QJ.

The Friends of Chicksands Priory. Mr. R. Cox, 19c, Luton Road, Wistead, Bedford, MK45 3EP.

Friends of Luton Museum. Mr. R. A. Barker, 36, Washbrook Close, Barton Le Clay, Bedford. MK45 4LF.

Harlington Heritage Trust. Mrs. M. Parker, 87, Sundon Road, Harlington, Luton, Beds. LU5 6LR.

Langford History Society. Mrs. J. Murphy, 95, Church Street, Langford, Beds. SG18 7QA.

Leighton Buzzard Local History Research Group. Mrs. M. Brown, 25, Rothschild Road, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 7SY.

Maypole Heritage. Mr. A. P. Bigg, Old Queens Head, 3 Sand Lane, Northill, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 9AE.

Potten History Society. Mrs. M. Leigh, 24, The Ridgeeway, Potten, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2PS.

Roxton Local History Society. Mr. P. Steer Jones, 8, Ford Lane, Roxton. Bedford. MK44 3EZ.

Todddington Historical Society. Mr. A. F. Walker, Mulberry Cottage, Park Road, Todddington, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 6AB.

Stotfold Local History Group. Mrs. C. Parry, 10, Ashley Drive, Upper Caldecote, Biggleswade, Beds.

Woburn Heritage Centre Trust. Ms. G. M. Green, 1, Leighton Street, Woburn, Milton Keynes, MK17 9PJ.

The following organisations also subscribe to the BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION.

Bedfordshire County Record Office. Mr. C. J. Pickford, County Record Office, County Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP

Bedford College of Higher Education. Dr. W. Coster, Polhill Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9EA.27.

Bedford Library. Mr. B. Stephenson, Harpur Street, Bedford. MK 40 1PG.

Dunstable Library. Ms. N. Avery, Vemon Place, Dunstable, Beds. LU5 4HA.

Dunstable Historical & Heritage Studies. Mrs. V. Evans, 184, West Street, Dunstable, Beds. LU6 1NX.

Luton Central Library (Reference Section). Mr. M. Stubbs, St. Georges Square, Luton Bedfordshire.

Luton Museum. Dr. E. Adey, Wardown Park, Luton, Beds. LU2 7HA.

Heritage Group, County Planning Dept. Mr. S. Coleman, County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford. MK42 9AP.

Woburn Abbey. Ms. L. A. Wellicome, Woburn Abbey, Woburn, Milton Keynes, MK43 0TP.