FUTURE EVENTS - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

COLWORTH HOUSE
A Guided Tour of Colworth House has been arranged for Sunday afternoon on the 5th of April 1998. The house as you probably know is part of the Unilever Plc. complex at Colworth Park, Sharnbrook and not generally open for view so don’t miss this opportunity. Full details will be in the January edition of HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.
The 1998 Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 16th. May 1998 at 2.15pm in the crypt of St. Mary’s Church, Park St., Woburn. Full details of the time, venue, and agenda will be sent to members of the Association by the Honorary Secretary a month or more before the meeting. Please make a note in your diary so that you can give your support to your Association on the day. As usual the Committee hopes to arrange an interesting talk by a nationally known personage to complete the afternoon.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE 1998
The 1998 Local History Conference will be hosted by the Potton History Society and will be held at Cockayne Hatley, a little known but interesting corner of our County. Full details, of the programme and a map of how to get there, will appear in a later edition of HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE in good time. Societies will be circulated in the usual way.

"PEOPLE"
The Bedfordshire Family History Society is hosting the East Anglian Association of Family History Societies’ One Day Conference and Research Day at the Mark Rutherford Upper School, Bedford on Saturday, 4th July 1998. There will be three talks as follows :-
Bleak ‘47 : Britain and the Irish Famine by Professor Frank Neal of Salford University.
Agricultural Labourers by Simon Pawley of Lincolnshire Family History Society.
Diseases of our Ancestors : Gout by Professor Roy Porter of the Wellcome Institute.
Registration 9.30-10.30am entry by ticket cost £15 per person including lunch, tea & coffee. Booking forms (stamped, addressed envelope) from Kath Gerrard, 34, Jubilee St., Luton, Beds., LU2 0EA.

CANCELLATION OF LOCAL HISTORY COMPETITION
Due to an insufficient number of entries, it is regretted that it has been necessary to cancel the Local History Lecture Contest, the finals of which were due to be held in the spring. It is particularly sad that this initiative should fail to raise sufficient response at a time when its criteria attracted national praise in the British Association for Local History’s Local History News. The organizers thanks those members who entered and hopes their disappointment will not prevent them preparing a lecture to offer Societies.
Manors and manorial records: part 2

Kevin Ward

In part 1 of this short introduction to manors and their records, I looked generally at Manors and Court Rolls commenting that the administration of copyhold tenure - the transfer and regulation of copyhold land - was, certainly by the 19th century but often much earlier, the primary business of Manor Courts. Indeed where copyhold tenure continued, a court had to continue to administer it. In parts 2 and 3 I will look at copyhold tenure and the conveyancing of copyhold land.

'Tenure' is the mode of holding land i.e. how land is held and the conditions of service attached to holding (or 'owning' as we would now put it) land. It was the direct result and a basic doctrine of feudalism, the structure of social organization which developed from the 11th century based on dependent land holding in return for services rendered, typically - initially - military service. In the feudal system, all land was held of some superior and ultimately of the Crown (the only 'owner' technically). In very simple terms the Crown had parcellled tracts of land out, in the form of manors, to tenants ('in chief') who in turn granted portions to lesser tenants who in turn sub-let further and so on down, each tenant owing various specified services, according to his particular tenure, to his immediate superior; thus the feudal 'triangular' structure developed.

In the early medieval period, an important distinction existed between 'free' or frank tenures (from which freehold developed) and 'unfree' tenures. Land held by an unfree (also called base, servile, bond or villein) tenure was strictly land forming part of a manor held simply 'at the will of the lord' and dependent on the performance of a whole range of specified duties and services. Unlike a tenant holding land by a free tenure (a 'freeholder'), an 'unfree' tenant had no security of tenure. He was bound to his Lord in several ways involving personal liabilities and services. He could be ejected at the will of the lord, his title was not protected by the Royal Courts, and he could not convey land without the lord's consent.

In short, unfree tenure afforded a relatively unstable and insecure title to land. Furthermore, a villein's life was regulated by the manorial court. The terms and obligations of his tenure would be settled by the court which would also deal with any failure to render due services, consider applications to sublet or exchange lands, and impose customary payments on the villein for permission to live away from the manor (chevage), for his daughter's marriage (merchet), and even fines for adultery and fornication (lairwite).

This negative picture can, however, easily be overstated. The actual nature of manors varied considerably. On balance, as with most things English, oppression was probably rare, 'reasonableness' the general rule - lords tended to follow custom although not legally bound to do so. Certainly, by the sixteenth century, the status of villeins had changed significantly as a result of:

- social and economic developments - especially the commutation of agricultural services into fixed money payments or rents, as part of estate management, and the gradual decline of the feudal reality
- the growing acknowledgement of custom as having a secure place in law (there was a growing body of case law and legal definition/body of legal precedent); and the intervention of the courts to protect villein tenants in disputes over custom - using in particular the equitable jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery

By the end of the medieval period tenure in villeinage had effectively become a newly recognized and secure form of tenure: tenure by certified copy of court roll 'at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor'. It was a tenure independent of the will of the lord in everything but name. Villeinage lost its taint of servility and became merely a form of landholding. Copyholders, as such 'tenant' landowners became known, were as well protected in their title as freeholders. Their title derived from the details recorded on the Manorial Court Roll of which the copyholder held a certified extracted 'copy'. The Court Rolls thus effectively registered the copyholder's title, an advantage unavailable to freeholders until much later with the spread of Land Registration. Many freeholders came to purchase copyhold land and add it to their estates.

After reform in 1660 only one freehold or 'free' tenure (common socage or tenure in fee simple in possession) survived. Copyhold or 'customary' tenure was retained as the only other recognized tenure with its peculiar and locally varied administrative procedures, customs, and 'incidents' (liabilities and obligations of tenure). Indeed the monetary value of 'incidents' to Lords of the Manor did much to extend the continuation of manorial administration.

After 1660 therefore land was either held by a freehold or copyhold tenure. Because it was founded on immemorial custom, copyhold tenure could not be newly created although it could be converted into freehold. It had necessarily to form part of a manor and its existence required a manor and the administration of a manor court. Generally administered by the Manorial Court Baron and dependent on local custom - with wide variations in terminology and the precise details of tenure - copyhold was, however, the subject of a growing body of case law and legal definition. Despite its often idiosyncratic nature, it came to be freely bought and sold, mortgaged, settled, sub-let, and otherwise conveyed. Conveyancing of
Manors and manorial records

cont. from p. 2

such land had its own terminology. Mortgaging was by 'conditional surrender' and 'warrants of satisfaction' were issued and recorded as receipts to redeem mortgages. Subletting - undertenancy - was by authorized licence as was permission to build (especially on the waste) and re-build property. All conveyancing transactions were founded on the basic principle of the Surrender and Admission (explained in Part 3).

By the late 18th century administration of copyhold tenure was the mainstay of the manorial court and increasingly seen as ripe for reform; indeed much copyhold land had already been assimilated to freeholds. A series of Copyhold Acts in the 1840s encouraged voluntary enfranchisement (turning copyhold into freehold) and further 19th century Acts led to compulsory enfranchisement. By this time a great deal of court business was already being transacted privately 'out of court', in the offices of solicitor-stewards, manorial courts meeting infrequently if at all. By the Law of Property Act 1922 all copyhold land was converted into land of freehold tenure.

New Publications

Old Trades of Dunstable (2), Shops and Markets by Fred Moore & Don Kemp, A5 PB. (ISBN 0 9529156 1 8). £2.95 (£3.40 including postage from B. Stevens, 12, Friars Walk, Dunstable.) pub. Dunstable & District Local History Society.

The second in this valuable series of booklets recording the histories of the businesses and the people involved in them that played a major part in the prosperity of the old market town. Fred Moore's well illustrated reminiscences on old shops, services and the towns trades people gives a comprehensive picture of Dunstable's commercial centre as it developed through the first 50 years of this century. This is complemented by Don Kemp's illustrated article detailing the history of the cattle market from the time of the towns charter in 1221 to the markets final days in 1955. There is much detail of day to day operation from the farmers input to the final arrival of meat in the 22 thriving butcher shops in the town. The effect of the war and rationing is dealt with in some depth including the Ministry of Food controls and policies and the burgeoning sanitary and food inspections, reminding us that rationing continued until 1954. In all a fascinating and worthwhile publication that captures the flavour of the old country market town.

Bridges of Bedfordshire by Angela Simco & Peter McKeague, A4 PB (ISBN 0 9531531 0 X). £14 50 post free from Sales Officer, Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, 14, Glebe Ave., Flitwick, Bedford, Mk45 1HS.

Research & Publications Working Group

Martin Lawrence

Following our report in the July '97 issue of HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE about the idea of publishing booklets based upon local research on Bedfordshire during the period 1815 - 1914, it has been decided to hold a workshop on this topic in the autumn of 1998. We shall be reviewing what local historians in the county have produced to date and we will be inviting a number of contributors to talk briefly about current research.

As Christmas approaches, why not give a friend a subscription to the Bedfordshire Magazine. This journal contains many articles of interest for local historians and has proved its value as a reference work over fifty years. A subscription costs £18 for a volume of eight issues, including postal costs. Subscriptions orders should be addressed to White Crescent Press Ltd., Crescent Road, Luton, LU2 0AG.

The Bedfordshire Local History Association still has some copies left of the invaluable reference works, the second and third supplements of A Bedfordshire Bibliography, covering the period 1960 - 1975, 214 pages, at a cost of 50 pence per supplement (if collected). These are remaining stock provided to the Association by the publishers, the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, specifically for the use of members. These volumes are available from the Hon. Secretary, Joan Curran, 7 Castle Close, Totternhoe, Dunstable Beds. LU6 1QJ.

Your Association has negotiated a further agreement with the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society to obtain copies of one past issue of the Society's volumes per year and sell it to members at a special discounted rate of £1 (collected). The volume on offer this year is Worthington George Smith and other studies, Volume 57, dating from 1978. It consists of nine articles presented to Miss Joyce Godber on her retirement as general editor for the Society and features an entertaining account of Worthington George Smith, the Dunstable antiquary. It also includes articles on the Bedfordshire lace industry, the 1830 riots in Bedfordshire and the 1919 Peace Riots in Luton. This outstanding offer is available from the Hon. Secretary, address as above.

In association with Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education, a course on Bedfordshire in the 1940's is currently running at Potton Community Centre. It is planned to organize further courses on this topic during 1998 in Totternhoe and possibly Toddington. We are keen to gather any information on this period and would be delighted to hear of any unpublished material on the subject. Please contact Martin Lawrence, Boot House, High Street, Blakesley, Nr. Towcester, Northants., NN12 8RE.
News from the Record Office

Bedfordshire Record Office is changing its name to Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service. This will reflect the joint nature of the funding of the office which is now shared between the Bedfordshire County Council and the Luton Borough Council. The building will continue to be known as the Record Office.

The Pilgrim Trust has given a grant to support the completion of the cataloguing of the West Park (Lucas) Archive. This Archive, deposited by the Lucas family in instalments over the years since 1936, is one of the most important and heavily used collections in the records office. It contains some superb maps and plans of the parishes on the estate, early deeds and manor court rolls, grants of arms, plans of West Park mansion and gardens, and a remarkable series of family correspondence of the Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries.

External funding has been obtained from the Bedford Association for National Trust Members and the Museums and Galleries Commission/Victoria & Albert Museum Museum Purchase Grant Fund for the purchase of two important Tudor documents, a common recovery of the Manor of Willington dated 1529 and a grant of land to the Gostwick family of Willington in 1539, which provide important historical information on the area. The document of 1539 is a royal grant with a fine initial portrait of Henry VIII. By this grant the Gostwick family acquired property, seized in the dissolution of the monasteries, from several religious foundations, including Chicksands Priory, Newnham Priory, and Warden Abbey. These documents add to the knowledge of the Willington estate already well documented in deeds and papers deposited by the trustees of the Bedford Settled Estates.

A useful review of Hospital records by James Collett-White is published in the August issue of the Record Office newsletter with part 2 to follow in December.

New Publications (cont. from p.3 Col.1)

In 1982 the County Surveyor embarked on a comprehensive programme of repairs to the historic bridges which lay on the public highway, seventeen of which are scheduled monuments or listed buildings, presenting an unparalleled opportunity to investigate the County's bridges as a related group. This volume presents the results of this research and recording programme and gives a fascinating insight into the development of roads throughout the county and where the responsibility lay for the construction and maintenance of the bridges across the centuries. The bridges of the Ouse, Ousel, Ivel, Flitt and Lea Valley's; the Nene Valley Tributaries: the Ivel Navigation; the Grand Union Canal and private parks are all detailed with their histories and methods of construction. A unique and valuable record.

Bedfordshire Wills 1484-1533 edited by Patricia Bell, A5 PB ISBN 0 85155 059 2. pub. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society.
The Society's volumes published in 1957 and 1966 covered 396 wills proven between 1480 and 1526. This latest edition contains details of 298 Bedfordshire wills, most of which were proved between 1510 and 1530, giving an insight into local, family and social history of the period. Even without the previous volumes there is much to learn from this one alone, for example, subtle changes can be detected in the gifts to the Church in the approach to the Reformation. All three together make a valuable reference collection.

Bedfordshire at War in Old Photographs by Nigel Lutt, A5 PB. £9.99 (£11 by post) from the Record Office, County Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP.
180 pictures illustrating the history of Bedfordshire at war over the last 300 years, from the Monmouth Rebellion to the Second World War. The chapter on the Second World War will be of particular interest to those taking part in the current research into the defences of that era in Bedfordshire.