FUTURE EVENTS - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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 will be circulated to members in due course. After the completion of the meeting there will be a talk entitled Code Breaking at Bletchley Park. We will hear a fascinating account of the work of this highly secret establishment, its crucial role in the defeat of Hitler’s Germany and its allies and its success in creating the first successful electronic computer the prelude to today’s computer age. At its peak it employed around 12,000 people. The equipment and skills they developed in reading the communications of the German and Japanese forces, and their success in keeping that success secret, probably shortened the war by up to two and a half years and saved countless Allied lives. Some of the decisions of how to use the information obtained remain controversial to this day. There will be no meeting charge except for the tea and biscuits, free car parking is available immediately opposite the Church.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE
The 1998 Local History Conference will be hosted by the Potton History Society and will be held on June 6th, 1998 in the Village Hall at Cockayne Hatley, a small Hamlet in the remote north-east corner of Bedfordshire. The theme will be the Millennium Challenge and delegates will spend the morning, using the history of the small parish of Cockayne Hatley to examine how we historians can increase the long term interest in history amongst a wider public in the coming years of the New Century. This will be followed by a guided tour of the area and lunch. After lunch the story of the area will be presented. The full programme and other details will be issued shortly.

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 School, Bedford on Saturday, 4th. July 1998. Details from K. Gerrard, 34, Jubilee St., Luton, Beds. LU2 0EA. A display stall will be available to the Bedfordshire Local History Association, Member Societies who wish to display publications please contact J. Curran (address see p.3).

Bedfordshire in the Nineteenth Century
The Bedfordshire Local History Association is holding a workshop on Bedfordshire in the Nineteenth Century in Harlington Parish Hall from 11am on 10th. October 1998. Full details are given in Martin Lawrence’s piece on page 3.
Manors and manorial records: part 3

Kevin Ward

Part 2 of my introduction to manors and their records was concerned with copyhold tenure. This, the concluding part to my trilogy, will look briefly at the conveyancing associated with land of copyhold tenure.

The system of succession to copyhold land was - bearing in mind considerable local variation - in simple terms as follows. Upon a copyholder’s death, his estate owed a heriot to the lord of the manor, usually the dead person’s best beast or a fixed sum instead. At the next court after the death, the homage would present (i.e. report) the death and make a proclamation for the heir, defined by local custom, to come forward and be ‘admitted’ to the land upon payment of the heriot and an entry fine (an ‘arbitrary’ but ‘reasonable’ sum fixed by custom). The heir would be admitted ‘by the rod’ (a billet of wood or other ceremonial object placed in his hands, usually by the steward) and by this ritual would, take seisin (possession) of the land. Then he would do his fealty (making an oath of fidelity and allegiance to the Lord of the Manor binding him to suit of court etc., involving book kissing, kneeling etc. - often ‘respite’ indefinitely), promise to pay the accustomed annual rent (usually a small fixed sum) and to perform ‘services’ (usually insignificant after the 16th century), and the succession was complete, the heir becoming the new copyholder. This procedure is recorded verbatim in copyhold conveyancing.

Conveyances of copyhold land took the form of Surrender (Grant) and Admission or Admittance (Re-grant). A copyholder, however he acquired his land (e.g. by will, inheritance, purchase etc.), had to be admitted to it by the Lord of the Manor (and had to surrender it to the Lord if he wished to sell it). Nevertheless, although the general pattern was uniform and remained quite constant, considerable variations and differences in customs and practices are to be found between manors.

The structure and format of clauses in conveyances involving copyhold land is as stereotyped as that of freehold ‘title deeds’. The main difference in form is that copyhold conveyances are always the record of the proceedings of a Court. Thus they almost invariably begin with a heading recording the name of the court, the Lord of the Manor, the date and regnal year, and the name of the steward. They are then as structured as title deeds of freehold lands except that the Court procedure (as explained above) is detailed and conditions much of the formal wording (e.g. the recitals, which refer to earlier relevant transactions involving the land, take the form of ‘presentments’). The ‘parcels’ section describing the land, give as much topographical detail as freehold instruments and also name occupiers (sub-tenants) past and present, of land and buildings involved. As such they are of course a rich topographical source and offer the same potential for research as freehold conveyancing instruments.

Often, Court Rolls include an alphabetical index of the personal names of surrenderors and admittees, especially after the 16th century when Rolls are often kept in book form. The succession of copyholders and the land which they held are often traceable for centuries using indexes. Occupiers, incidentally, are not indexed in the Rolls.

At the Record Office most transactions involving copyhold land are to be found by using deposited Manorial Court Rolls which are indexed alphabetically by the parish within which the manor lay. A sub-section of the Manors index does exist however for ‘copies’ (copyhold conveyances extracted from Court Rolls for Bedfordshire Manors) which have usually been deposited as ‘title deeds’. Where you are dealing with land and you know it to have been copyhold you should look straight away to see if we hold the Court Rolls for the Manor as that is where the earlier evidence of title will be for the land concerned since it will have been of copyhold tenure from ‘time immemorial’. Stray copies are only really of use where the Court Rolls for a particular manor are missing.

Part 1 of Manors and manorial records was published in July 1997 in History in Bedfordshire volume 2 no. 5 and part 2 was published in October 1997 in History in Bedfordshire volume 2 no. 6.

THE COPROLOLITE INDUSTRY

We have been contacted by Bernard O’Connor who is researching the history of the Coprolite industry in Bedfordshire. If any of our readers have any documentary evidence of the industry such as photographs, survey maps, agreements, sale particulars, newspaper articles or anything they consider relevant he would be very pleased to hear from them. He can be contacted as follows :-

Bernard O’Connor, 69, Sandy Road, Everton, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2JU.
The Association has proposed the idea of utilizing our local history network in the county by collaborating with society and individual members in the writing and publication of a series of pamphlets on Bedfordshire in the years 1815-1914. There is no set timetable for this project, which will be determined by the interest and enthusiasm of our members. Your committee is keen to move matters forward and we hope that you will support them by your attendance and participation.

On Saturday 10 October 1998 the Association is organizing a Workshop entitled, Bedfordshire in the Nineteenth Century. The purpose is to share information about any aspect of town or village life in the County during this period. We want to make the day as interesting as possible and this can be achieved by providing a variety of presentations. A programme item could be as limited as one object or photograph or as broad as a major piece of research. We hope that you will be willing to speak on your topic for five minutes. It will be important that items are included from differing locations around the County, so that all areas of Bedfordshire are covered.

If you are willing to take part, please contact the Hon. Secretary, Joan Curran, 7 Castle Close, Tottemhoe, Dunstable, Beds. LU6 1QJ. Tel. (01525) 221963. The venue for the workshop will be Harlington Parish Hall and currently we plan to start at approximately 11.00am. We suggest bringing a packed lunch and coffee will be provided. The afternoon session will end with tea at about 3.15pm. There will be no charge except a donation towards refreshments and hire of the hall.

This event will contribute to our response to the “Histories for the Millennium” initiative being co-ordinated by the Open Studies in Family and Community History Group at the Open University. Your committee have selected as our focus, Bedfordshire in 1851. The aim will be to include an exhibition or talk on this topic in the programme for the year 2000.

We are delighted to report the sale of over 100 copies of Worthington George Smith and other studies, Volume 57 of the publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, which has proved very popular with our members. A few copies may still be available from Joan Curran at the special discounted rate for this limited period of £1 (if collected).

Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education ran a successful course on Bedfordshire in the 1940's during last autumn. Our thanks go to Potton and Biggleswade History Societies for providing additional insights into the period in their part of the County. This course is to be repeated on Tuesday evenings from 24th. February 1998, between 7.00pm and 9.00pm at Tottemhoe Lower School. Further information from Anne Anthony, The Community Office, Vandyke Community College, Vandyke Road, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 8HS, (01525) 375769. We hope to glean extra information from the south of the County on this occasion. The research from these courses will contribute towards the Association exhibition on Bedfordshire At War for the Bedfordshire Festival in 1999. We are writing to local societies inviting them to prepare displays on this topic.

**Anglia University - CENTRE for REGIONAL STUDIES**

The Centre for Regional Studies is a new initiative from Anglia Polytechnic University. It aims to provide a focus for the wide range of research, particularly in archaeology, ecology, landscape and local history and vernacular and religious architecture, that is being carried out across the region.

- The Centre’s activities aim to bring current academic research exploring this diversity to the general public and to provide an academic context for independent researchers through a programme of 8 monthly lectures during the academic year (initially 5 in 1997/8), open to Associate Members of the Centre. These will be arranged each year around a multi-disciplinary theme and will be delivered by prominent practitioners within their fields.

- A programme of informal meetings and seminars (initially 3 in 1997/8), open to Associate Members of the Centre, highlighting current research on the archaeology, history and development of the region.

- A lively forum for the exchange of information between the general public and local archaeological, historical and ecological societies and museums, local history collections, county archaeological units and other interested bodies.

- An annual newsletter noting current research and publications.

- Information about a range of courses in regional studies.

If you are interested in finding out more about what is happening in the fields of archaeology, history, architecture and landscape in the region, join the Centre’s Associate Members Scheme from January - September 1998, at the special introductory subscription of £6. (The usual annual subscription, beginning on 1st October 1998, will run from October to September alongside the academic year, and will be £10 per year.)
NEW PUBLICATIONS

Potton Manor - an enigma by T.C.M. Ball, 71pp, published by the Potton History Society, £3.50 incl. p&p. from Mrs. Leigh, 8, Station Road, Biggleswade, Beds.

Mr. Ball has recently published a second edition of his book on Potton Manor. It is considerably enlarged over the first edition, published in 1988 and contains a wealth of old pictures, diagrams and maps. Potton is a small town in the east of Bedfordshire, with many historic associations. In mediaeval times it was one of the three largest towns in Bedfordshire. The book describes the various occupants of the Manor from the Underwoods in the 17th century to the Potton Timber Company in recent times. The original manor house, pictured in the book, was demolished in the mid-19th century by a Mr. Wagstaffe, who built a new manor house, however, he did not enjoy it for long as he was killed boarding a train at the local station! Many stories are told of the various Lords of the Manor, with particular emphasis on Mr. Smekal and Eva Pokorova in the period 1946 to 1966. This strange couple, who originated from Czechoslovakia, worked in great secrecy in the manor house, developing a process for obtaining petrol from tar - frequently with explosive results. Finally they turned to developing and selling a small car - the Potton Delta Research Car - imported from Germany. The book is particularly relevant today as one such car, now owned by the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, has returned to Potton in the care of the Potton History Society and can be viewed at many local events.

Dr. Anthony Crossley.

Eveton & Tempsford Airfield by Bernard O'Connor, A5 Pb, designed & printed by Mayhyme Publishing. The construction and later expansion of the airfield on Everton Heath is described. An account is given of the secret nature of its use in the 1939/45 war by the SOE and other services. About 600 agents were transported by Lysanders and other aircraft deep into the heart of German occupied territories, including as far afield as Yugoslavia. Many now famous agents including Odette Churchill and Yeo Thomas flew from here on their dangerous and sometimes fatal missions.


This book, written by members of the Lidlington History Society, is split into three sections and traces the history of the village from AD 275 to the present day. It follows the progression of time through facts, stories and photographs. Many of the photographs are of people and, as a lot of names are recorded, will be of interest to family historians with ancestors in the district.

Section one deals with the history from the early days through the medieval period to the riots in the 1830's and looks at the 1851 to 1881 census returns relating to the school. Section 2 has many ‘then and now’ photographs and also pictures of people and school groups. Unfortunately not many of the schoolchildren in the more recent photographs are identified. The final section covers the present century and includes some fascinating reminiscences, stories of the Second World War and items about the various village organizations. Other parts record the coming of the Marston Valley Brick Co. Ltd. and the vehicle proving ground.

All in all the book shows signs that it has been extensively researched and the group is to be congratulated on producing an excellent example of this type of publication.

Peter J. Wood

Colworth in Context, by Mike Jones with introduction by J. Collett-White. Qto Hb, 300pp 160 illustrations, £20 plus £3.25 p&p from M. Jones, Antonie Farm, Sharnbrook, Beds, MK44 1LE.

Mark Antonie built the 1720 Palladian house at a time of extraordinary business confidence but before completion the bubble burst and disaster struck. Succeeding owners spent huge sums on the house, yet it was sold in 1934 for £2,875 for probable demolition. The South Sea Bubble, Napoleonic War, Enclosures, Captain Swing and the Opium Trade are finally succeeded by the development of the PIAT gun and the USAAF bomber base in WW2 which became part of the estate.