Bedfordshire Local History Association are very pleased to announce that the 1996 Lecture will be given by Dr. Nigel Agar on the subject of *Behind the Plough in 19th Century Bedfordshire*. Dr. Agar, a lecturer in History, retired from the North Hertfordshire College but continues to give Adult Education classes in Nineteenth Century Social History. He is author of *The Bedfordshire Farm Worker in the Nineteenth Century* (BHRS Vol. 60) and hopes that his next book, *Behind the Plough in Hertfordshire*, will be published shortly.

The 1996 Lecture will take place on **Saturday, 24th February 1996** at 2.00pm. in the Village Hall, High Street, Houghton Conquest. The hall is easy to find and is near the village Post Office not far from the Church. Refreshments will be available afterwards as usual.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1996**

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the Association will be held on **Saturday May 11th. 1996** at 2.15pm. at the John Dony Centre, Hancock Drive, Luton. A map to assist members to find the venue will be issued with the official notification of the meeting in April.

After the completion of the AGM at approximately 3.00 pm, **Marian Nichols** (Principal Keeper, Luton Museum Service) will give a short presentation on the *Social History of the Hat Industry*.

This will be followed by a talk on the **Buildings of the Hat Industry in Luton** by **Dr. David Bevan** (Historic Buildings Team Leader, Bedfordshire County Planning Department).

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS**
RUNNING THE 1995 LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

Martin Lawrence started the idea of a conference of local history societies at Harlington. Initially it was for Mid-Bedfordshire societies but since we at Toddington were close neighbours we were invited too. Over the next six years we attended all the conferences as it gradually expanded northwards. By 1995 we felt it really was our turn to host the Conference, especially as we now have a Village Hall in Toddington (which had taken over 40 years to come to fruition!).

Since we are officially in South Bedfordshire we felt it was time to make the Mid-Beds. Conference a County Conference. I suppose we should have asked someone but we didn’t, we just announced that we were inviting all likely interested groups throughout the County.

By June 1994 the Conference date was fixed and the hall booked for June 17th. 1995, - good advance planning. Unfortunately the 17th. was also chosen by other organizations throughout the County for Fairs, Fetes, Coach Trips, Commemorations and other local jamborees - but we did not know this until the Spring. There is a good case for choosing a later date for the Conference when the Summer activities are over and it is not to cold for sightseeing - say early October.

At the ‘94 Conference Dr. Mark Bailey had proposed five headings under which any community could be examined. Rather than let this approach to local history dwindle away in our memories, we thought we would base our Conference on the application of his headings to Toddington. The headings were Topography, Economy, Institutions, Population/Wealth and Lordship.

I was instructed to polish off the last item in a paragraph. The first item which included early settlement and communications was entrusted to Dr. Joshua Pollard, an Archaeologist, and one-time junior member of our Society. Population/Wealth which sounds boring, was made entertaining and an eye-opener by Ivan Jones, a man experienced in keeping sixth-formers awake. The speaker for the Economy and Institutions wrote to say he was unable to do his bit, just a week before the Conference! To fill this gap Chris Pickford and Martin Lawrence did an heroic double-act for which we were very grateful.

In the end it all went off very well. While a splendid lunch was being laid out, all the delegates went of in groups to explore the village for real. Rather than have a guide for each group we had fixed guides for each area and the groups moved from one guide to another. Thus each area could be covered in more depth with less for each guide to research.

It was hard work, all our members made an effort to help in some way. We hope our visitors found the whole day worthwhile.

Editors note:- A very entertaining day and most excellent lunch with the added innovation of really local wine from Toddington’s wine makers.

1996 BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

The East-Beds. group of Local History Societies (i.e. Biggleswade, Langford and Roxton) have volunteered to run the 1996 Local History Conference and your editor has already received a programme from organizer Rex Skinner, so make a note in your diary now.

The date :- 22nd. of June 1996, the time :- 09.45 to 16.30, the venue :- Trinity Methodist Church, Shortmead Street, Biggleswade.

After registration, refreshments and introductions, Joel Carr will give an illustrated talk on the Kingfisher Way. This will be followed by a guided town walk until lunch. In the Afternoon the delegates will be entertained by two further speakers, Drew Shottiff on the Stratton excavations and Eve McLaughlin on Surnames.

Invitations are expected to be despatched in March.

Readers Letters.

Referring to your article “Common Ground - Parish Map” in April, we did have a map in Toddington but it was done as a video! I have a rough written account of our trials and tribulations if your readers would be interested. In the end the sales of the video made a profit of over £700 for our new village hall. It will be a good record of Toddington in 1993 for future local historians. We recommend that other committees do the same.

Tony Walker

The use of a video camera adds an extra and very worthwhile dimension to recording contemporary history and how about adding updates at least every decade? Ed.
New Home For Journal Archive
Stephen Coleman
Following Bedfordshire Library Service's decision to dispose of certain periodicals the following have now been transferred to the St Mary's Archaeology Centre in Bedford:

British Archaeological Abstracts 1968-90.
British Archaeological News 1960-78.
English Place-name Society Journal 1968-89.
Garden History 1976-90.
Industrial Archaeology 1981-84.
Industrial Archaeology Review 1976-87.
Journal of the British Archaeological Association 1942-49,
1951-84.
Medieval Archaeology 1957-90.
Midland History 1971-90.

If anyone wishes to consult any of these volumes they are available subject to making an appointment. Please ring Stephen Coleman on 01234 228072 to arrange this when required.

Luton Museum and Art Gallery
On Monday 28th. October 1995, the existing archaeology and natural history galleries of Luton Museum & Art Gallery closed to the public whilst new displays of the archaeology and environment of the Luton district are being created. The fresh displays will feature a geology and fossils exhibit, dioramas of woodland, wetland and downland environments and a replica of a prehistoric house. The prehistoric and Saxon skeletons, firm favourites with the children, will be retained. The new displays are due to open in March 1996.

Enjoyable Visit to Odell
The visit to Odell in October proved to be a very popular and most enjoyable event. The members and their guests gathered at the Manor and were warmly welcomed by the Hon. and Mrs. Lawson Johnston. When all were assembled and the welcome completed, the gathering split into four groups, each with its guide, and proceeded on a pleasant stroll in the afternoon sunshine through the village.

Stephen Coleman had provided each guide with an aide-memoire of historical data to supplement their own knowledge of the village which ensured all important features were pointed out. The owners of the old water mill, now a private house, kindly invited all the groups into their delightful garden, so that the waterwheel, millrace and eel trap could be properly examined. On completion of the tour all groups met together in the church where Stephen recapitulated and enlarged upon what had been seen.

The Chairman, Martin Lawrence, introduced Miss Patricia Bell who then addressed the gathering on Distinguished Families of Odell concentrating on the Alston family who owned the Manor from mediaeval times until Lord Luke's father purchased it in the 1930's. The present Odell Castle is on the site of the previous mediaeval house and the present day Manor was in fact the old vicarage, also for many years in the hands of the Alstons, as they owned the living and the younger sons provided the vicars. Miss Bell's talk was both informative and highly entertaining and was further enlivened when one of two visitors, who had entered the church towards the end of the talk, announced that he was an Alston from Suffolk who, by a strange coincidence, had decided to visit Odell for the first time that very afternoon to examine the church monuments for family connections.

Finally the whole gathering (all 82 of them) returned to the Manor for tea, where they were given the freedom of the very attractive house and garden by their most hospitable hosts.

Diary of Forthcoming Events
Saturday, 13th. January 1996. The Harlington Heritage Trust have a Bedfordshire Evening - a social gathering with entertainment and food on a Bedfordshire theme. Further details from Meryl Parker on 01525 873875.

Saturday, 24th. February, 1996 2.00pm. Bedfordshire Local History Association Lecture will be Behind the Plough in 19th Century Bedfordshire by Dr. Nigel Agar and will take place at Houghton Conquest Village Hall (see page 1 for details).


Saturday, May 11th. 1996 Bedfordshire Local History Association Annual General Meeting 2.00pm. (see page 1 for details).

Saturday, June 22nd. 1996 9.45am. Bedfordshire Local History Conference at the Trinity Methodist Church, Shortmead Street, Biggleswade (see page 2 for details).
The Ministry of Defence has officially announced that its new Defence Intelligence and Security Centre will be formed at RAF Chicksands to bring together a number of individual defence intelligence and related units. The Intelligence Centre at Ashford will be one of the first elements moving to the new location and will be functional by late 1996. The remaining units will move shortly thereafter and all are scheduled to be in place by mid 1997. All possible measures will be taken to avoid civilian redundancies as a result of this decision. The MOD states that the creation of this central facility and the decision to base it at Chicksands, will make for the efficient and cost effective operation of this important element of their work.

Thus the uncertainty over Chicksands Priory's immediate future is all but over, it is to be used as the Officers Mess and will be completely refurbished during the next eighteen months. This work will be supervised by T.B.V. Schal., who are experienced in this type of restoration in conjunction with English Heritage. The importance of the research and other work carried out by the Friends of Chicksands Priory over the years is recognized and, although it is unlikely that the building will be open to the public on a regular basis, it is hoped that organized tours by historical, architectural and similar groups will be allowed as and when military circumstances permit.

Meetings are to be held between the DISC Implementation Leader, Group Captain Peter Bingham, and the Friends to decide the way forward for the relationship and all members of the Friends wish to continue their involvement with the Priory.