

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Volume 4. No. 11.

Winter 2008/9

BLHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009 & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The **2009 Bedfordshire Local History Association Local History Conference** will be held on **Saturday the 13th June 2009** at the **Village Hall Clapham**, hosted by **Clapham Historical Society**. Please particularly note the date as it has changed since the early correspondence issued on the subject. As in previous years, the Conference will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting of the Association and, of course, no charge will be made for those who wish to attend the AGM only and are unable to stay for the conference. Details of the full programme, timing and registration details will be issued when finalised.

The **Clapham Historical Society** previously hosted the Conference in June 2001 and are delighted to have the opportunity to do so again this year. The theme will be mainly the WWII era but other interesting items of local history throughout the years will be included. A visit to the Glenn Miller museum and the war time camp is on the agenda. This has now been greatly restored and improved and one could spend hours there but time will be limited, however, some may be tempted to make a further visit at a later date! Also on the programme are talks on the land army and the RAE. The **Clapham Historical Society** hope you will join them for an enjoyable and interesting day with the promise of a delicious buffet lunch. Conference fee, including lunch, £17.00 per delegate.

"THE BIGGEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG IN BEDFORDSHIRE"

The **Friends of Flitton and Greenfield Church** have tickets available for their talk entitled "**The Biggest Archaeological Dig in Bedfordshire**" to be given by **Mike Dawson** on **Friday 6th February 2009** at the Church Hall, Flitton, bar opens 6.45pm for 7.30 pm start. This illustrated talk describes the extensive archaeological discoveries that preceded the construction of the Great Barford Bypass. Tickets £7.50 including cake, biscuits, coffee etc. £5 for under 14s. Tickets from Margaret Butt, Greenfield Farm, Greenfield, Beds MK45 5DD 01525-717083 or mkatebutt@yahoo.co.uk, cash or cheque made payable to The Friends of Flitton and Greenfield Church.

All proceeds go to St John the Baptist, Flitton including the interior restoration fund.

WANTED!! ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION IN "HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE"

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE urgently requires more articles to enable it to be published at regular intervals throughout the year. Bring the results of your own or your society's work to the attention of a wider audience. Articles around 1700 words, somewhat less if containing illustrations, will fill two pages but shorter articles are equally acceptable. Longer topics can be accommodated by splitting the article into parts and publishing them in consecutive issues. Society Secretaries if you wish to publicise a special event to a wider audience we will be happy to include it in our events page. We look forward to hearing from you. Next copy date for publication March 15th 2009, items for later publication are, of course, also welcome.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION - WEB SITE COMPETITION

In 2002 the Association held a very successful web-site competition for societies, other organisations and groups in Bedfordshire.

It has been decided to hold the competition again in 2009. The winner will be announced at the Local History Conference in Clapham in June.

The winning entry will receive a silver salver and a cash award. The judging panel welcome a large number of entries. There have been considerable developments in web-site design since 2002 and the competition will be an opportunity to showcase and celebrate these valuable research tools.

The criteria that will be used for judging will be:

- ♦ Ease of access and navigation
- ♦ Site design
- ♦ Historical value of the content

Further details for entry are available from bedfordshirelha@googlemail.com

BEDFORDSHIRE HISTORICAL RECORD SOCIETY

The Bedfordshire Historical Record Society has commenced a project to create an interactive database of secondary sources on Bedfordshire.

Building upon its long and successful record of annual local historical record publishing, since 1912, the Society wishes to develop an interactive finding aid which can be used by researchers around the world.

The Society published a Bedfordshire Bibliography in 1962, followed by three supplements in 1967, 1971 and 1978. In addition to hard copy volumes, Bedfordshire Bibliography has also been made available on microfiche (Chadwyck-Healey) and on CD-ROM (ProQuest) as part of the National Inventory of Documentary Sources.

The Society has reserved funding for updating the Bibliography and will engage with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to work on the project. A steering group of Society trustees has been established and a scoping report commissioned from a consultant. The Society, through its consultant, has entered into discussions with interested parties.

The Society has already invested in an interactive web-site to facilitate users of its 86 published volumes and believes that an interactive database of secondary sources will add considerable value for researchers into Bedfordshire's past. It will be complementary to the BLARS Adlib catalogue of primary sources, which is highly regarded nationally.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION - WEB SITE

The Bedfordshire Local History Association is currently developing its web site: www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

It has appointed a new webmaster who is upgrading its design and updating current material. It is intended that the newsletter will be able to be downloaded in pdf format and there will be links to other societies and access portals for research.

Committee officers will be able to be communicated with via the site. The web-site will extend access to our societies and will promote their work.

AMPTHILL HISTORIAN RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Every year the British Association for Local History publicly honours local historians who have made outstanding and significant voluntary contributions to the subject in their own areas, up to six awards are made annually to represent the whole of the country.

In 2008 the British Association for Local History recognised the Ampthill historian Andrew Underwood's considerable contribution to research, recording and publication of local history, particularly of Ampthill, by presenting him with an Award "*in Recognition of Personal Achievement*".

This award was the second he had received in 2008 as he had already been awarded a medal from the Ampthill Town Council roll of honour for his outstanding work in the researching and recording of the history of Ampthill and its people.

Andrew Underwood has provided inspiration and guidance to countless new (and old) historians in Ampthill and around the County both as a member of Bedford Modern School staff and in the wider community. He has written numerous articles and books including *Ampthill a Godly Heritage*, *Ampthill in my Bones*, *Bedford Modern School of the Black and Red* and a *History of St. Andrew's Church*.

Andrew Underwood's extensive collection of Ampthill material, started 65 years ago as a nine year old, includes glass plate negatives, press & other photographs, newspaper articles, promotional leaflets documented memories and much, much more, meticulously catalogued, has now been deposited with the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service for the benefit of future researchers.

CLAPHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1992 and has enjoyed nearly 17 years of success and expansion since then. The membership is about 45 people at present, mainly from Clapham and the surrounding areas, with a few from Bedford. Our programme is varied and interesting and over the past year included trips to the Mansion House and St Albans by train, coach trips to Kenwood House, Hampstead and Lavenham, a ghost tour around Ampthill and outings to Wimpole Hall and Brixworth by car. Each year we try to visit new places of historical interest within a reasonable distance from Bedford. In the winter months we have 3 or 4 invited speakers in the Village Hall and a Christmas dinner. Our AGM is towards the end of March and this year includes a talk on the Prisoners of Norman Cross by Paul Chamberlain.

The ongoing project of the Society is to publish a book about the history of Clapham from the Iron Age through to the present day and the Committee have been collecting information for the past few years.

For any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Chairman, Mrs Mollie Foster, on 01234 350353.

FARMING IN BEDFORDSHIRE 1883

Letter to the Daily News December 25th 1883 from Mr. George Street, a tenant of the Duke of Bedford, the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act was passed in 1878 :-

Sir, I am not at all surprised that practical men who are graziers and not breeders of stock should begin to inquire whether "the restrictions are set more detrimental than the disease itself." The fact is, we have had the maximum of annoyance and the minimum of benefit. That the disease was of foreign origin no reasonable person can doubt, and if it had been dealt with as vigorously and as sensibly as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland is now dealing with it in Ireland, and as some English counties have dealt with it, the question would never have been raised. I myself have sold this year 700 Oxfordshire Down rams, 30 of which have gone to South America and about 20 to Germany, and you may imagine the anxiety one feels lest at any moment he should be hedged in by restrictions, or the rams should fall with the disease and be rendered unfit for service. Only a few days since I was prevented selling about forty shearling ewes to a gentleman in Cumberland in consequence of the restrictions as to foot-and-mouth complaint. Yet, as a breeder of horses, cattle, sheep and pigs, I hold that restrictions against infectious or contagious diseases are absolutely necessary, but they should begin at the right place (beyond the seas) and be efficiently carried out, both abroad and at home and not become a mere sham. I too have had forty years' experience in farming, and well remember the time of free trade in disease, when keen business men who were not breeders would go into a large fair or market and buy Welsh, Hereford, or Devon beasts just as they were falling with, or recovering from, foot-and-mouth complaint, at a very considerable sacrifice on the part of the

FARMING IN BEDFORDSHIRE 1883
(CONT. FROM PREVIOUS COLUMN)

seller. The loss of condition was more than discounted to the buyer, hence the out-cry for no restrictions on the part of some graziers and dealers is perfectly intelligible. There are two other sides to the question,---the breeders' and the consumers' interests, and how they are affected. To the breeders who have just begun to turn the scale of a yearly decrease in the live stock of Great Britain, foot-and-mouth complaint means a vast amount of anxiety and incalculable loss, and to the consumers it means a short supply of milk and butter, and probably disease amongst their children, and to the head of every family an increased butcher's bill. When these facts are realised a most important point will be gained towards the prevention of infectious and contagious diseases.

Yours truly
GEORGE STREET

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

The Bedfordshire Local History Association is an affiliated member of the British Association for Local History (BALH) and our individual members are welcome to join any of the organized activities of the BALH. The visits are designed for small groups to visit those less accessible places and collections, They are advertised in the Local History News and on their web site www.balh.co.uk and booking forms are on the events page as they become available.

BALH's programme of Visits and Events for 2009 is as follows :-

January 22nd. St. George's Chapel Archives and St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

February 27th to March 1st. Who do you think you are? Exhibition, London.

March 4th. The Apothecaries Hall and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, London.

April. Nottingham University Archives.

May 13th. Verulamium, St Alban's Cathedral and St Alban's Museum.

June 6th. Professor Nigel Goose's lecture on Almshouses. Friends' Meeting House. London.

July 9th to 12th. Local History in Britain after Hoskins. Conference at Leicester University.

July. Avonscroft, Bromsgrove.

September 15th. Newark Castle's part in the Civil War and a cruise on the Trent in a Salter.

October. The Guardian Newspaper Archive and the London Museum.

November 7th. Hull Conference, New Research into the History of Yorkshire.

Future events: - 2010- Conference in Lincoln.

2011- Conference in Aberystwyth,

All details for these activities and application forms will be posted on the web site as they come available. Alternatively details can be obtained from: BALH, PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne. DE6 5WH

New Publications

Lutonion Odyssey Reminiscences of Lily Field for 1915-52, edited by **Clive D. Field, O.B.E.**. Pub. by Dr. D Field price £6. Pb. Illustrated. *

Lily Field was a lifelong Lutonian. Born in 1915, her childhood was overshadowed by the death of her father and one sister in 1918 and that of her other sister in 1924. Her mother brought her up, in straitened circumstances, first in Round Green and then in Selbourne Road and Lily was denied the opportunity to go to high school and instead became apprenticed in the hat trade. She lived in Dudley Street, High Town from 1935 to 1952. After a number of unsuccessful relationships, Lily eventually married in 1949. She died in 1982.

Lily's reminiscences, substantially written in 1979 and now published for the first time, recount her life from 1915 to 1952. They describe her home and family circumstances, her education at Hitchin Road and Denbigh Road Schools, her association with Methodism, her career in the hat industry, her wartime experiences, and her courtship, wedding and early married life. They also illuminate many aspects of the social history of Luton between the wars. The memoirs are augmented by Lily's diary for 1942 and by original photographs from her family album.

Lily's son, Clive D. Field, has edited Lily's reminiscences for publication. Born in Luton in 1950, he was educated at Dunstable Grammar School and Wadham College, Oxford, where he read modern history. He spent his professional career in academic libraries, ultimately becoming Director of Scholarship and Collections at The British Library. Now semi-retired, he is an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Modern History at the University of Birmingham. He was awarded an O.B.E. in 2007 for services to literature.

* Available from **Dr. C. D. Field, 35, Elvetham Rd., Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2LZ**, Price £6.00 (inclusive of p&p) make cheque payable to Dr. D. C. Field.

Leighton Buzzard and Linslade a History by **Paul Brown**, pub. by Phillimore & Co. Ltd., hb. Illustrated. ISBN. 978 1 86077 495 9, price£16.99

The towns of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, separated by the

river Ouzel, were both royal estates before Domesday, and straddled the boundary between the Danes and Saxons in the century before that. Henry II gave the Leighton estate to a French abbey, which built a daughter house on the new lands, but war flared with France during the Middle Ages and ownership of the town shuttled between France and England as successive kings confiscated the estate, only to return it again as soon as peace was restored. Much of Leighton was burned down during the Civil War but the centuries that followed brought settled prosperity to a market town dominated by large inns.

The industrial revolution and the advent of improved means of transport turned Linslade, the almost forgotten backwater across the river in Buckinghamshire, into a thriving new town which moved from its old site to be close to the new canal and railway station. The high-quality sand quarried locally became the standard filter for all of Britain's water undertakings and the raw material for fine glass, including that used to build London's Crystal Palace. The London gentry, including two successive Princes of Wales, came to Linslade to hunt and stabled their horses in the town.

Vimy bombers were built in Linslade during the First World War, and both towns saw continued expansion afterwards as new industries grew. The Second World War witnessed an influx of child evacuees from London, a transformation of the town's industries for the war effort and the arrival of a top secret RAF station. In 1965 Leighton Buzzard and Linslade were amalgamated under local government reorganisation and the latter was brought into Bedfordshire. A period of considerable expansion for both settlements followed.

This long awaited, readable and extremely informative history throws light on Leighton and Linslade's fascinating past and will be enjoyed by all those curious about this corner of the county. It is fully illustrated and includes many items here for the first time.

The author, Paul Brown, has worked as a reporter and news editor on a number of regional and national newspapers for 40 years. He has written 8 books on environmental topics. His *A Children's History of Greenpeace* won the New York Library Prize for best children's book in 1996.

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE is published by the **BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

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Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to the above address, together with a stamped addressed envelope if the contribution is to be returned. Contributions may be in any readable form, including on compatible disc. If the latter is employed please consult the editor before despatch to avoid compatibility problems.

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