



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## LOOKING BACK

1952 – 2002

### **The Background:**

In 1948 a Standing Conference for Local History was set up by the National Council for Social Service and this proved the catalyst for the foundation in most counties of associations which would act as umbrella organisations to encourage the study of local history, alerting people to the importance of preserving records of all kinds and providing an information service about sources. In 1950 a Village Study Group met at Impington Village College to discuss the need for communities and organisations within the County of Cambridgeshire to “pool”resources and the idea of an “umbrella” structure was mooted to councillors at both parish and district level.

### **How things Began:**

The Society had its origin in a public meeting called by M.G. Martindale of the Community Council, on 15 May 1950 at the Carpenter Hall in Victoria Street, Cambridge. The 1950 meeting set up a provisional committee which, after meeting a couple of times, called an inaugural meeting at the Guildhall on 16 July 1951 for the creation of a Cambridgeshire Local History Council. The moving spirits in the foundation were the Rev. Professor C.E. Raven, Warden of Madingley Hall; Humphrey Bashford, senior history master at the Leys School, Jim Mitchell, a Tutor with the University Extra Mural Board, and Edward Miller, History Tutor of St.John’s College.

### **1952 - Setting Up the Society:**

It was not until January 1952 that the very first meeting of the Cambridgeshire Local History Council took place at the Folk Museum, addressed by the King’s College historian John Saltmarsh, whose topic was “Cambridge before the colleges”. It was reported in the first Bulletin, which also reported that several members of the Council attended the Standing Conference for Local History, now in its third year. Correspondents were being sought for in as many Cambridge villages as possible so that their work could be co ordinated by the Council.

The Council expanded rapidly and by 1953 had 140 members as well as seven affiliated societies, among them the Folk Museum, the Cambridge & District Women’s Citizens Association, the Leys School History Society (whose members helped on several archaeological digs) and the WEA (as early as 1953 the Soham WEA branch was doing transcripts of Parochial accounts. Many individual villages

sent correspondents - even from as far north as Doddington and Manea, then in the old Isle of Ely to a meeting in January 1953. Enid Porter of the Folk Museum was the first programme organiser.

R. C. Lambeth of the Folk Museum and CoSIRA (Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas) put the county on the map by making a BBC programme entitled "The Fen Country". News and popularity of the CLHC was spreading. Over eighty members attended a conducted tour of Sawston Hall, home of the Huddleston family. However, it was not the intention of this newly-formed organisation to be in competition with others such as the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (CAS) which had been formed over a century earlier, but to "keep in touch" with what was happening in the villages post-war and to record the changing face of the county. Membership fees were kept low at half a crown (twelve and a half pence) and this included two bulletins and periodic meetings - it must be remembered that at that time a lot of national-level publications could be bought for a shilling (5p) or less; in the first year accounts a grant was made of £5 from the LEA to help with expenses!

Topics for discussion and investigation at this time were varied: the County planning report; Ancient Monuments listings (now English Heritage); sites of Scientific Interest (now Nature Conservancy); village development plans (many of which were never implemented) and local history on the school curriculum - the Education Officer stated that he "was keen to develop interest in local history in schools."

In the autumn of 1952 that the Agricultural History Society was launched at Reading and as in Cambridgeshire at that time there were no Agricultural Depositories the CLHC took upon itself to research aspects of agriculture in this important farming area. Participation with the Hunts and Isle Community Council meant that CLHC received reports regarding Old People's Clubs, Rural Crafts etc and the university archivist was involved, showing cooperation between county and university - a rare commodity in the fifties! Gifts were also accepted on the society's behalf e.g. a selection of books from a vicar in the Gloucestershire.

### **The 1950's – a County wide Society**

Regular talks on Saturday afternoons were organised from at least 1953. In 1955 that the society had its first woman speaker - Sybil Marshall, herself a real Fen Tiger, who came up to Cambridge as a mature student. In that year, Madingley Hall hosted a local history weekend for the princely sum of fourteen shillings (sixty pence!) Dr Jack Ravensdale commented in a meeting that this year had been "one of high hopes and disappointments."

In 1956 at the AGM for at Linton Village College Dr. F.M. Walters of the Botanic Garden announced the formation of CAMBIENT (the Cambs and Isle of Ely Naturalists Trust.) A "county" organisation which formed strong links with CLHC. and Professor Darby organised a course in connection with the University Board of Extramural Studies at Madingley . Another highlight was a talk be Doctor John Alexander at Sawston Village College on "Excavations at Castle Hill." The Cambridge School of Art offered to design a bulletin cover complete with logo. Thus

it can be seen that in the Fifties the Council attracted many organisations both at county and national level, achieving its original aim of “keeping in touch”.

## **The 1960’s – expansion of local history in the Press and the foundation of Village Societies**

By 1960 the local press was covering a lot of historical reporting, so it was decided to produce only one bulletin per year instead of two (to this day our president, Mike Petty, continues to write items of historical interest in the Cambridge Evening News three times per week.)

The numbers of the village correspondents had declined and meetings ceased in 1960. Although the big event of 1960 was the AGM at Audley End just over the county border numbers attending ordinary meetings began to fall, from eighty to forty. Possibly this was because many villages had started their own historical societies. A first attempt at an Essay competition received only one entry for the title “Working with horses” (maybe the title was offputting?) In the 1960s agriculture in Cambridgeshire was in a state of rapid change -mechanisation was all important and employees were leaving the farms by the hundreds. District councillor, Frank Murfitt, from Guilden Morden, gave a talk on the topic “County Life in Cambridgeshire.”

Another link was to the Cambridge Cottage Improvement Society, whose Secretary Helen Larke was a long term member and contributor (obituary 1987). Excursions were made at this time to Cambridgeshire Cottage Improvement Society properties at Landbeach, Fen Drayton, Grantchester and Abington.

A circuit of churches at Willingham, Over and Swavesey, with tea at Stiles’ Restaurant in St. Ives was another afternoon treat. In 1962, going further afield in South Cambridgeshire, the tour of the village was led by Mr. Dickinson, followed by tea at Thriplow Manor, home of committee member G.O. Vinter (ex High Sheriff of the County.) The twelfth AGM was held in the Georgian Room at Fulbourn Manor with the president, M. C. Burkitt (chairman of Cambs. County Council) in charge. Involvement with Over Sixties Clubs resulted in a really good essay competition with sixty seven entries on “Recollections” and eighteen on “Hobbies” This was a real boost to the committee’s work.

In 1968 a list of classes and researchers was first compiled. (This may have led to the publication, from 1980, of Conduit, which was originally conceived as a joint publication with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society). In 1968, following a complaint that the Council was only “an organisation for entertainment” in local history, a motion was passed at the AGM for the more active study of local history. A list of active researchers was compiled and a Research Committee met spasmodically from 1968 to 1983 at which a series of active researchers related their experiences.

Speakers in the Sixties included Canon Bywaters of Willingham and J.M. Farrar on the work of the new County Records Office: Mrs. Owen on the Ely Diocese and Mrs. Rackham on Victorian Schools and Margaret Spufford on *Growth and Decline of some Medieval Cambs. Villages*.

## **1970's – the Silver Jubilee**

By the Seventies Mike Petty (our current president), Richard Smail (son of Doctor R.C.Smail) and Derek Last (director of EARO) were on the speakers' list and in 1974 David Dymond and Lionel Munby debated "Is there too much Local History?" Others were Tony Kirby (Cambridge's First Railway) and Mike Rouse (Soham's Past).

Our Silver Jubilee was celebrated in 1976. In the Bulletin, the Chairman Geoffrey Wood wrote a brief history of the founding of the Council and its activities. It also contained a most interesting article on "Cambridgeshire dialect of over fifty years ago" by that well-known historian A. Non. A memoriam to Geoffrey Wood in 1980 states: "Geoffrey was a member from 1952, Hon. Secretary, editor of bulletin, programme organiser, excursions sec., and the Cambs. Local History Council owes him a great debt." It is thanks to such men as him that the Council has been able to celebrate over thirty years of involvement with the community.

The Council did not forget education and the schools essay competition was revived for a short while from 1972. receiving some excellent entries – some were published in the Bulletin, and one "History of the fields in Ten West Cambridgeshire Villages" was published separately.

## **1980's – Change to the Cambridgeshire Local History Society**

Andrew Pye and Michael Farrar contributed time and effort to the organisation in the Eighties (see below) and Council changed its name to the Society in 1983. Michael Farrar organised a project to collect Records and Inscriptions on buildings about to be demolished, and the Society joined the newly founded British Association for Local History, which took over from the Standing Council for Local History as the national body for Local History. President for 1986 was Jack Ravensdale, a noted local historian and lecturer at Homerton College, with Sylvia Beamon from Royston in the chair. Joan Fitch, a long term member of the Committee, received the OBE for her work with Voluntary Housing in Cambridge. She had written several articles for the Bulletin on the subject, Sylvia was the prime mover in forming the "New Collectors Group" which proved popular. Gill Rushworth organised the Photographic Group (see below).

In 1987 the Society followed the example of other counties in organising a history festival at Impington College. Organised from from the Record Office and partly sponsored by the Village College, it had a large support but was somewhat chaotic owing to the unsuitability of the site.

## **The nineties – an aging society?**

During the Nineties the Society continued to have seven Winter meetings and three Summer excursions. Attendance at meetings and excursions declined during this period as many of the older members became too frail to attend. In the last few years membership and attendance have both increased. The annual bulletin (renamed Review) edited jointly by Francesca Ashburner and Gill Rushworth receives a steady

supply of articles and two newsletters keep members” in touch” with what is happening at local and national level.

## **The Lecture Programmes**

During the 1950's lectures were held at the Museum of Archaeology or St. John's College. From 1959 to about 1969 a less gloomy place for meetings was the School of Agriculture thanks to the Chairman Dr Edith Whetham. By 1981 it had moved to Homerton College, and then in 1990 to St. John's Church Hall. The monthly meetings were moved experimentally to a Wednesday evening in October 1996 and the following season, but, the change was unwelcome to many, and by a majority of one vote the members agreed to revert to the traditional Saturday afternoon. In 1998 an April meeting was added to the programme list. From 1967 there was for many years also an evening meeting, a slide party, at which members showed their transparencies.

## **Festivals and Conferences**

A Madingley weekends was held in 1955 by Professor Darby.

**Festivals.** The Society followed the example of other counties in organising history festivals, the first at Impington Village College in 1987 and the second at Wimpole Hall in 1990. The Huntingdonshire Local History Society followed this lead and the third, and unfortunately last, "Festival of History and Aviation" in the County was at Godmanchester in 1992. Over fifty societies, museums etc. had stands at the first two events, and a still creditable 46 at the third.

**Day conferences** A local History Symposium was held in November 1991 jointly with the Hertfordshire Association for Local History in Royston with a large audience.

In 1992 it was at Homerton College on *Aspects of Cambridge History* with over 50 attending. A highlight was the last minute talk by Mike Petty *An adventure of Sherlock Holmes in Cambridge* every movement illustrated by slides from the Cambridgeshire Collection.

One conference held during the 1990s at Lucy Cavendish College was on *Transport*. The enthusiastic but small audience heard a presentations from a panel of excellent speakers. The Conference saw the recruitment a number of new members.

A workshop to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was held in April 2005.

## **ANNIVERSARIES**

Something should be said about the three anniversaries celebrated over these fifty years. The first, the Silver Jubilee October 15th 1976, was held at Fitzwilliam College by invitation of the Master of the College and first Chairman of the Society, Professor Edward Miller. Over 100 members and friends attended including Humphrey Bashford and his wife who had come down from Hull. An outline of the society history was given by Geoffrey Wood who thanked everyone whose

enthusiasm in those early days had been vital to ensure the Council was soundly based from the beginning.

On 27th July 1991 the Fortieth birthday was celebrated with a lunch at Lucy Cavendish College, when twenty-three members attended.

The biggest celebration was reserved for the Golden Anniversary. On the 16th September 2001 members and guests were welcomed to the Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, Waterbeach, by Lady Hughes, Chairman of the Trustees of the Museum. Mike Petty, President of the Society then planted an Oak tree aided by Mr Christopher Parish, a founder member of the Society. Michael Farrar, Chairman, then revealed a Bronze Plaque commemorating the event.

On the 27th October members and guest were invited by Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education to a tea party at Madingley Hall. This provided an opportunity for people from societies throughout the county to exchange ideas and receive inspiration from each other. It was on this occasion that the presentation of awards to celebrate some of the excellent publications on local history topics published in the county was inaugurated.

## **BULLETIN/REVIEW**

No history of a Society can be complete without mentioning the main form of communication between members – the annual journal.

The first *Bulletin* appeared in 1952, without a date or an editor's name. It consisted of six double-sided duplicated pages and contained an account of the first meeting of the Local History Council at the Folk Museum and a plea for correspondents for Cambridgeshire villages so that their work could be co-ordinated by the Council. Unfortunately by 1960 Village Correspondents, for one reason or another, had just about given up.

For the first few years issues were produced in spring and autumn, but by 1961 it was felt that some historical articles were being published elsewhere and that only one edition would be needed. There were still articles by members, researches on various subjects, reports on exhibitions, AGMs and excursions plus lists of the winter lectures.

It was not until 1959 that a cover was designed which incorporated the County arms, in 1969 this was exchanged for the familiar Cambridgeshire corn dolly which lasted for several years. From 1976 there have been a series of different illustrations on the cover depicting areas of Cambridgeshire life.

By 1990 there was a reluctance by members to take on the responsibility of editor, and consequently there were no *Bulletins* for 1990 and 1991. It was decided to make a new start, so the journal was re-launched as the *Review* New Series with a greater emphasis on articles. The first eight covers of the *Review* showed the Society's logo, but since that time, there have again been different illustrations to each volume

## Recollections of Aspects of the Society

### THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL AND SOCIETY - MAY 1981 TO MAY 1985.

#### *Some recollections by Andrew J Pye*

These are my personal recollections of events some 20 years ago and rely on my imperfect memory. I have concentrated on some of the changes, which occurred at that time.

I joined the Cambridgeshire Local History Council as a schoolboy, probably around 1960 and I believe I have been a member ever since, although it is possible my membership lapsed for a few years in the early 1970s as I was living abroad. In the 1960s, though, I attended regularly the Saturday afternoon lecture meetings and I recall usually being the youngest member by far of those present.

In 1975 I returned to live in Cambridgeshire and was a founder member and for a number of years Chairman of the newly formed Cambridgeshire Family History Society. The Family History Society membership grew at quite a rate and I was struck by the wide spectrum of people who joined, most of whom were active historians, albeit within a limited field delineated by their own family.

With my love of local history, I wondered what could be done to boost interest in Cambridgeshire and attract a younger and wider cross section of people. When Geoffrey Vintner decided it was time for him to retire from the Chairmanship of the Local History Council I discussed with him offering myself as his successor. He was happy to sponsor me, although there were suggestions from some quarters that I was a young turk, perhaps with a hidden agenda. My hopes were for a vibrant, active, growing Local History Council and nothing more. I did however feel that some changes and initiatives were probably desirable and should be explored and discussed by the Committee and membership.

I was elected Chairman at the 1981 Annual General Meeting. One of the first topics I floated was the size of the Committee, which had grown over the years and it had become perhaps over large for the work required of it. It was agreed to reduce the size of the committee and allocate specific roles, such as publicising the Council and its activities, to individual Committee members.

The name Local History Council had come about for good historic reasons, but it did rather suggest an official body, to which you perhaps had to be elected, rather than a local history society keen to welcome new members of all ages from all walks of life. So it was resolved to change the name to Cambridgeshire Local History Society and I persuaded a graphic artist colleague to draw the map logo for the "new" Society, which is still in use today. I recall that from that outline alone Michael Farrar, then County Archivist, identified the date of the source map!

We asked the membership what they wanted of their Society by means of a questionnaire and tried new activities, such as an all day conference with a varied programme, including guest speaker Alec Clifton Taylor the architectural historian,

who was well known for his *Six English Towns* series of television programmes. Any society functions better if its finances are sound and we took some steps to increase income to improve our ability to fund new activities. We sought to attract new members, including sending publicity material to members of the Family History Society, editorial mentions of the Society and activities in the local newspapers and active co-operation with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, including jointly publishing the new Conduit.

I recall a lively hard-working Committee and I enjoyed my time as Chairman and would have continued (if re-elected!), but work pressures, including more frequent overseas travel, meant that I could not give the Society the time it deserved and I stepped down from the chair at the 1985 Annual General Meeting.

## **CLHS EXCURSIONS - AS I REMEMBER THEM.**

### *Some recollections by Alice Showell*

Excursions have from the beginning, always played an important part in the CLHS. In 1953 members visited the Bartlow Hills, Hadstock and Saffron Walden in Essex followed by a visit to Madingley Hall. In subsequent years we visited sites in Suffolk and Essex, a rare one to Norfolk and Bedford then more in Suffolk and Essex. Amongst all these the Cambridgeshire villages were not forgotten with visits, such as to Melbourn, Ashwell, Willingham, Over, and Abington. Cambridge itself was not neglected - there was a walk around the Castle End district in 1961; in 1963 there was a walk from Hobson's Conduit to the King's Ditch, followed by the King's Parade area in 1967 and visits to colleges, Trinity, Emmanuel, Trinity Hall. In later years although still visiting Suffolk fairly frequently outings were taken further afield; to Rutland, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire.

The first local history outings I myself remember were two evening outings in the 1980s, soon after I joined the Society. One was a guided tour of the Botanic Gardens, led by one of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens - the first time I actually saw tea, coffee and cocoa plants growing, in the Greenhouses! The other was a tour of the Folk Museum led by Tom Doig. Unfortunately, it was very poorly attended, although it was very interesting; so, after that the evening outings were dropped.

The Excursions Secretary at that time was Evelyn McEwan and I remember going on one of her trips to St. Alban's. I think the morning was free to go to the Roman Museum or wherever one wished, with a guided tour of the Cathedral in the afternoon. That would have been about 1989.

After that Ron English took over as Excursions Secretary and arranged some excellent days out. There was usually one jointly with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, arranged alternately by them and by us, and about two other excursions each summer. We had at least one coach outing each year, which was usually well supported in the early days, especially when both Societies were involved, while others were guided walks round Cambridge or neighbouring villages using one's own transport.

Some that I particularly remember were:

**1993** - a guided tour of Eton College, exhaustingly comprehensive, but I remember particularly the original schoolroom and the long, long Memorial Wall inscribed with the names of Old Boys killed in two World Wars.

**1991** - a guided tour of Cressing Temple barns in Essex, led by Adrian Gibson, the most enthusiastic guide I have ever come across.

**1992** – Ones that I couldn't go on included: - Lambeth Palace and the Museum of Gardening

**1994** - a tour of Landguard Fort and Felixstowe with a very privileged tour of the Docks not usually open to the public. Ron English, at that time, worked for Trinity College, who own the land on which the Docks are built.

**1996** - a guided tour of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea led by a very knowledgeable Pensioner, who pointed out a lot of things a normal visitor would never see.

When Ron gave up running the excursions no-one was willing to take on the job and, by then, support for all day coach excursions had waned. However, the walking tours of Cambridgeshire villages remained popular - as they still are today. The CAS also had difficulty finding an excursions organiser and the joint excursions faded away.

But most years there has been one coach excursion. Mike Petty led tours of the Fens for three years running, with his own inimitable commentary, which were excellent days out. We managed to fill a coach for the first two years, with help from Mike's students one year and Comberton Antiquarian Society the other year, but by the third year numbers had dropped drastically.

I have led three excursions for the Society over the years. In 1998, I took a party of Local History and CAS members to the Prebendal Manorial House, Nassington and to Deene Park, both Northamptonshire, which worked very well, with a beautiful sunny day and two good properties. The Manor House is medieval in parts and very interesting and Deene Park is a complete contrast, a mainly Georgian stately home owned by descendants of the Earl of Cardigan who led the charge of the Light Brigade.

About a couple of years later, I took a party from the Society and Comberton AS to Chicheley House and Claydon House, both in Buckinghamshire. Again, two contrasting properties, one a stately home owned by the family of Earl Beatty and the other a National Trust property with outstanding rococo decoration in Chinese style. We had a reasonably full coach and a good day out, although not so good as the Northamptonshire outing, as the regular guide at Chicheley was unavailable and the last minute substitute wasn't very good.

In 2004, I took a party to Ightham Mote, a National Trust property in Kent, which is a medieval moated Manor House, fully restored by the National Trust and a very interesting place to visit. That time we had a party made up of Society members, Comberton AS members and members of Hardwick Gardening Club! However, we filled the coach between us and, in spite of rather mixed weather, had another good day out.

There have been lots of walking tours around Cambridge and district since I became a member, led by Ron in the early days and, since he retired, usually by a member of the local history society of the village visited. I have very much enjoyed the ones I have been on and learnt a lot more local history - most societies seem to have a really knowledgeable and entertaining guide to their particular village - but I had to miss a lot of them, after husband Bernard found walking difficult. I especially remember Isleham some years ago, led by Sue Oosthuizen, and also Duxford led by Mr Longstaff, There was a fascinating visit to Royston Cave many years ago, led by Sylvia Beamon, There was Hildersham a couple of years ago, led by Andrew Westwood-Bate and Balsham last year. But there have, of course, been many more.

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### *Some recollections by Peter Filby*

I have been a member of CLHS for about ten years, but have been researching aspects of local history for many years. I occasionally attended the monthly talks for particular subjects. However there was such an interesting variety of speakers that I decided to join, and looking back I have met some interesting people and heard some fascinating talks. The questions to speakers also prompt some interesting interchange amongst us. Many of those who attend are not doing much, if any, active research themselves but have a general interest in local history topics. For some whose families or interests have Cambridgeshire associations the regular slide talks bring back memories of their own recollections or of what they have been told by others. Like myself, several members are actively researching individual subjects, but whatever the topic all those who attend gain stimulation and can help one another and with our fellow researchers we often exchange information. After a talk the tea or coffee and biscuits which is a feature of our meetings also facilitates communication between members and non-members alike.

My own research includes aspects of local industrial history, and I also help with the restoration of buildings, mills, and machinery. But it is when one wants to research those topics you find a lot has been published in general, but not always specific to what is required. This leads me to do a lot of original research and I have to seek many printed and archival sources in a variety of libraries and repositories.

The Cambridgeshire Collection at the Cambridge Central Library is usually the first starting place, perhaps with the able assistance from the staff. This is an excellent and immense collection of printed books works on local history covering the former county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely - books, pamphlets, newspapers, and printed ephemera, many of which are indexed. There is also a good collection of county maps, and a large photographic archive. It is also a meeting place for members doing research. Huntingdon library holds its own county collection and several other libraries including Ely, March, Wisbech, and others also hold good local history collections. For documentary manuscript and archival sources one often has to visit the County Record Offices at Cambridge and Huntingdon, and sometimes those of the adjoining counties, or the Public Record Office at Kew. Cambridge

University Library is another excellent resource, and also holds the Ely Diocesan records.

For many years the Cambridge Local History Society has had close link with our county libraries and archives. At present the county libraries and archives are facing enormous financial pressure from local government through cuts in their expenditure on Heritage. This is resulting in cuts in staff, affecting their morale, service, and the availability of materials both now and for the future. These cuts have already savaged the library and museum budgets. Redevelopment of the Lion Yard is causing more problems for the Central Library, but hopefully will result in better use of space. The Cambridgeshire Collection will be moved to a new floor over the void in the present lending library, but will also lose part of the purpose rebuilt fire proof store which was created for it just five years ago in the wake of the catastrophic Norwich library fire.

The County Record Office is facing financial cuts for future years, but already Cambridgeshire is a poor runner up in the provision of archives to most of the other counties in England and Wales. Many record offices are modern, spacious, and nice to use for staff and users alike. Most have some form of secure storage for users and also have at least facilities for drinks. They also have adequate temperature controlled and secure storage for archives. Cambridgeshire County Council has already received warnings about the cramped storage conditions of its archives. Many documents have been donated and others are loaned on deposit by their owners. As users know there is an incredible amount of material held, and a knowledgeable and helpful staff to supply it. A new county record office is planned to replace the present completely inadequate storage and accommodation for staff and readers alike. This is long overdue, but when (if?) completed this will also need adequate staffing and facilities. Hopefully this is where CLHS can help and lobby councillors that at present woefully control the Heritage purse strings.

In many ways our futures are intertwined through mutual interest. The Cambridgeshire Local History Society is fifty years old, and we hope it will go on for many more years to come. It is partly up to us to see that we should look to a future together with that of our counties archives, libraries, and museums heritage.

We are living in a world where much new technology is evolving and thus is affecting us all. Digital media, documentation, and much information is now being made available on the world wide web so that we can read it in our homes. Record Offices and Libraries are digitising archives, maps, photographs, and also their catalogues. This often saves valuable travelling and visiting time, also we can ask for specific records to be fetched in advance. But in the future will our meetings become a thing of the past? Some speakers are giving 'PowerPoint' presentations instead of slides. Will video conferencing or chat rooms be part of the future for societies like ours, or be a supplement to meetings? If so, we shall miss the social side of our talks, and perhaps also that of the pleasant summer visits. Another possibility is collaborating with other societies such as the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Cambridge Family History Society, or Cambridge Industrial Archaeology Society. We are already cooperating with village societies, some of whom host our annual meetings, and with

others in providing interesting local displays at these and other events and local history fairs.

## **CHESTERTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### **THE STORY OF AN AFFILIATED SOCIETY**

#### *Some recollections by Derek Stubbings*

Local History is a subject that has many and varied lines of interest, street names for instance. In Cambridge we have a very large number of streets, some very old, some new. All have an origin, names cover local and national people, events etc. as well as relating to areas of the town and of surrounding villages.

Most street names can be traced without much difficulty, others need much research and a few need some guess work or are just plain unknown. Many people have at least some interest in the name of the street in which they live and a talk on street names is a popular choice for many Groups.

Here in Cambridge following many years of research and later in close collaboration a book **CAMBRIDGE STREET NAMES** by Dr. Ronald Gray and Derek Stubbings was published in 2000 by Cambridge University Press. Work in recording new (and old) street names continues and has now expanded into other areas of local names and connections.

One important part of this is **THE WRITING ON THE WALL**. Records of such items as foundation stones, boundary markers, painted wall advertisements, etc., etc., are kept for a wide range of buildings, many of which no longer exist. Other examples are often added and all such records can add much to local history knowledge.

For many people Local History is for them their own area, where they were born and / or long personal or family residence, or perhaps an area that has special personal memories or interest.

Here in Chesterton we live in one of the most interesting areas of Cambridge, which it became part of 1911. Archaeological excavation in recent years in several central village sites show that Chesterton has a very long history back to the Bronze Age. There are signs that a planned village was developing, (although that did not continue) and in very early days almost certainly was more important than nearby Cambridge.

The position of the village in several ways gave it special importance. The parish was a large one and included the Arbury area which in Roman times was much occupied and extensively farmed. A Roman road ran straight to the river Cam and provided water transport for farm produce to the Roman Northern garrisons.

There is some evidence that the ferry at the Green Dragon Pub site was a much used river crossing in those days. Later that same pub site crossing was a regular stop for the river trade that developed from Norman times and when Stourbridge Fair came into being the effect on Chesterton was enormous.

The Chesterton Local History Group was formed in April 1982 and been active ever since, and of course maintained its interest in the traditional and more recently acquired knowledge. Meeting monthly September to April or May it has enjoyed speakers on many subjects of local interest as well as looking further afield.

It early produced its own Guide - *A WALK AROUND CHESTERTON*, which proved very popular. Later the Tempus Press produced in 2001 CHESTERTON in the *IMAGE OF BRITAIN* series, this sold in considerable numbers, some going overseas and is still in demand.

The Group has always been prepared to support local events with the Churches in the area, talks to local groups and school children.

Extensive archive records, both written and photographic are kept and the Group maintains good relationships with the Cambridgeshire Collection and the Cambridge and County Folk Museum. This Group is an associate member of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### **PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT 1992 – 2000**

#### *Some recollections by Gill Rushworth*

Being interested in photography I went to the Society's 1992 Annual General Meeting as the speaker was to be Sascha Playfair of the Cambridge Camera Club. Little did I know that I was about to be targeted by the President Mike Petty and the then Chairman Sylvia Beamon to co-ordinate a new photographic scheme.

In the 1920s and 1930s the Cambridge Antiquarian Society had recommended that photographers record the changes in the villages before many of the older houses, barns, mills and dovecots disappeared. In 1939 the Second World War put a stop to the recording and little was done after the war. It was Mike Petty's idea to resume recording the villages as, once again, great changes were taking place and many interesting buildings being lost due to decay, accident or deliberate destruction.

I agreed to undertake the co-ordination of the project until the year 2000. I started by taking photocopies of the original Cambridge Antiquarian Society photographs for my own village, reproducing as near as possible the same views plus any other items of interest which caught my eye. Once this was done a display was produced and I visited other societies and conferences to encourage others to take part. I also had to try and acquire funding for the project from outside sources.

The photographers paid a fee which provided photocopies of the C.A.S. photographs fully labelled, copies of maps and a year's subscription to the Society. The volunteer photographers were then asked to take new shots from as near to the original viewpoint as possible. That was the easy part. Photographs then had to be matched with the originals, positions marked on the maps, and given an identity number, usually the negative number.

Work in progress was exhibited from time to time, for example, at the conferences of the local societies, including the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, in the Cambridge Central Library, and at the local Parish Council Centenary Celebration held at Peterborough in July 1995.

By May 1996 some 43 village surveys were complete, and by the end of 1999 the figure had risen to 60 out of approximately 154 Cambridgeshire villages. Two villages already had their own collections and another made its own, using the project as a starting-point. Three villages were also completed in Huntingdonshire. Although nine photographers failed to complete the project, several others managed more than one village. One or two more would have been surveyed had they not suffered a number of burglaries just as the volunteer was preparing to photograph them, it was felt not to be a good idea at that time! Despite appeals for further volunteers some parts of the county are only poorly represented in the final collection, notably in the south, on the Suffolk border, and in the Isle of Ely. About 2000 new pictures with their negatives, arranged by place, were added to the original survey, and deposited in the Cambridgeshire Collection, Central Library. A second set was lodged in the County Record Office at Shire Hall. The project was sponsored by the Eastern Arts Board, Photographic Archives; the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments; Robert Kiln Enterprises Ltd.; the David Urwin arts Award; various Women's Institutes and parish councils. To all of them the Cambridgeshire Local History Society and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society are grateful.

The Photographic project closed in the year 2000 as no-one could be found to continue with it and the co-ordinator wished to move on to other projects.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

### ***Some thoughts by our Chairman – Tom Doig***

CLHS can look back with pride at its achievements over the 50 years since its formation. However, like so many similar organisations, our Society has to concern itself with its development in the future. So often, we worry about the increasing age of our membership and wonder how we can attract the younger generation. But should we be concerned? Possible members of that younger age group have careers to develop, a family to care for, as well as a range of other responsibilities which do not affect the lives of what we see as the core of our current membership. These younger people will, in their own time, fill the gaps left when we move on to 'other places.'

If we agree that membership numbers is not our main concern, where do we see our Society going in the next 50 years? It is clear that, with the development of information technology, many of Cambridgeshire's local history and village societies are able to produce their own publications. This seems to be leading to them taking a more parochial involvement

in local history and guiding them away from the more general 'County' view.

Should our Society endeavour to reverse this trend or should we 'go with the flow' and encourage our members to become more independent?

It may be that our Society is perceived to be a holding group, or sounding board, for local history in Cambridgeshire and this could be an impression that we might promote. We, as a committee and membership, have wide experience and skills in research and presentation of local history and there is good reason to believe that we could offer advice and help with the development of individual societies. CLHS has the ear of local government and can bring to their attention matters of historical concern. We have links with museums, archaeology, industrial, landscape, ecclesiastical, military, etc. history. We offer seminars, lectures, excursions and publications. Should we extend our activities into other areas? How can we become more involved in the events organised by our member societies? Are we offering value for money?

All these questions will need to be addressed and resolved in the near future. Nonetheless, it is clear that CLHS has a role for this future and that, like the past 50 years, the coming 50 years will offer challenges as well as opportunities.

---

## APPENDIX I Officers of the Council

### Presidents:

(The President was originally termed Chairman of the Council, as distinct from the Chairman of the Executive Committee.)

Sep 1951	-	May 1955	Rev. Professor Charles Earle Raven
Jul 1955	-	Apr 1970	Mr Miles Crawford Burkitt
Apr 1970	-	May 1980	Mr Geoffrey Odell Vinter
May 1980	-	May 1986	Professor Edward Miller
May 1986	-	May 1988	Mr John Richard Ravensdale
May 1988	-		Mr Michael Petty

### Chairmen:

Jul 1951	-	May 1960	Mr Edward Miller
Jul 1960	-	Nov 1963	Miss Edith Holt Whetham
Jul 1964	-	Apr 1968	Mr Arthur W. Arundale
Apr 1968	-	Jan 1980	Mr Geoffrey Wood
May 1980	-	May 1981	Mr Dudley Vavasour Durell
May 1981	-	May 1985	Mr Andrew J. Pye
May 1985	-	May 1986	<b><i>Position vacant</i></b>
May 1986	-	May 1995	Mrs Sylvia Beamon
May 1995	-	May 2007	Mr Michael Farrar
May 2007	-		Mr Tom Doig

## Vice-Chairmen

Sep 1951	-	May 1961	Mr. J.R-Mitchell
Jul 1962	-	July 1964	Councilor A.W. Arundale
Jul 1964	-	Apr 1966	Mr. Charles E. Townley
Apr 1966	-	Apr 1968	Mrs. Doris Frowd
Apr 1968	-	May 1970	<i>Position vacant</i>
May 1970	-	May 1972	Miss Edith Holt Whetham
May 1973	-	May 1974	Mr. C.B. Staniforth
May 1975	-	May 1978	Mr. Dudley Vavasour Durell
May 1980	-	May 1982	Mrs. Joan E. Moullin
May 1982	-	May 1985	Mr. Dudley Vavasour Durell
May 1985	-	Apr 1990	Mr. Andrew J. Pye
Apr 1990	-	May 1995	Mr. Anthony Kirby
May 1995	-	May 2005	Mrs. Sylvia Beamon
May 2000	-	May 2007	<i>Position Vacant</i>
May 2007	-		Mrs Honor Ridout

## General Secretaries

Nov 1950	-	Mar 1971	Mr. Henry Tristram Eeles
Mar 1971	-	Jun 1973	Mr. Michael George Martindale
Jul 1973	-	1982	Mr. Lachlan Maxwell Forbes

## Honorary Secretaries

Jul 1951	-	Mar 1956	Mr. Humphrey John Charles Bashford
May 1956	-	May 1975	Mr. Geoffrey Wood
May 1975	-	May 1986	Mr. Anthony Kirby
May 1988	-	May 1995	Miss Anne Elizabeth Cooper (later George)
June 1995	-	May 2005	Mrs. Gill Rushworth
May 2005	-		Mr. Andrew Westwood-Bate

## Honorary Treasurers

Sep 1951	-	July 1955	Mr. H.W. Liddle
Jul 1956	-	July 1961	Mrs. H.W. Liddle
Jul 1961	-	May 1969	Mrs. Kathleen Farmer Jackson
June 1969	-	May 1976	Miss Helen M. Larke
May 1976	-	May 1980	Mr. Brian D. Threlfall
May 1980	-	May 1983	Mrs. F. Evelyn McEwan
July 1983	-	May 1992	Miss D. A. Humphries
May 1992	-	May 2005	Mrs. Alice Showell
May 2005	-	May 2007	Mr. Michael Farrar
May 2007	-		Mr. Bernard Amps