

## WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The society has begun a new decade in entertaining style.

January 1990's meeting was a Victorian Evening, based on the idea of a concert given in Milton Board School in 1885. Members and friends entertained the audience with a feast of words and music depicting the life and times of this area one hundred years ago.

The casts read, sang, played or recited from contemporary sources and from material researched and written by present day members. This covered many aspects of everyday life - Christmas, health, manners, cooking, in schools and on farms -- the latter received special attention because of its problems in the latter half of the last century - low prices and wages, Union activity, cutting down the forest, enclosures, emigration, the coming of the railways and the fear of the Workhouse.

Items on the pianoforte and vocal interpretation of Victorian ballads, as well as some modern variations which showed the delights of modern day history gathering, took the form of solos, duets and quartets - varying from the mournful to the hilarious - performed with great feeling by the young and not so young, all beautifully accompanied. The performance concluded with the suitably attired audience backing the cast in community singing.

The whole evening had been enhanced by excellent refreshments and splendid staging and lighting. What a pity it was for one night only, however the occasion was recorded on VHS video which can be hired for £1 per week, (contact John Rawlins on 830668), or you can buy a copy for £5.50 from Mike Linfield, (830601).

February's meeting was entitled 'The Life and Times of Edward Stone'. Who is or was Edward Stone was a question asked by many members before the meeting. The speaker, Ralph Mann, had also been asked that question many years before. His subsequent painstaking research enabled him to give an entertaining answer.

Edward Stone, a contemporary of John Wesley, became a clergyman after study at Wadham College, Oxford. Whilst he was a vicar near Banbury, he began to suspect that there was a connection with his ever increasing fever, ague, and the fact that his Drayton Vicarage was low lying and damp.

Still acting as Vicar at Drayton, he moved to higher ground at Chipping Norton, where he found some relief from the ague. He then accepted the Chaplaincy of Bruern Abbey and acted as political agent for its owner, Sir Jonathan Cope, and also became an industrious Justice of the Peace.

Edward Stone then began working on the theory that the cure for his disease was perhaps to be found not far from the cause - dampness. He started to take the bark from willow (salix) trees. This he dried and crushed into powder which he tested first on his parishioners and then on himself. All found relief from pain. This was duly reported to and recorded by the Royal Society, but very little interest was shown at the time in this discovery of a new pain reliever - salicylic acid - aspirin.

The next meeting of the Society, at Shipton Village Hall will be on Tuesday, the 10th April, when Alan Crossley will speak on 'Finding out about Places'.

(continued overleaf)

This season's meetings come to an end with the Annual General Meeting on the 8th May, in Milton Village Hall followed by a talk on The Athenian Trireme by Tom Hassall.

A few of the mugs which depict scenes of Milton and Shipton, as mentioned in the last issue of this magazine, are still available. (Please contact Jack Chapman on 830498).



Our Victorian Entertainers.

## ST. MICHAEL'S, MILTON ROAD, SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD

In the early 1880s, St. Michael's School transferred from the house below the Crown to the newly constructed building in Milton Lane (now road). Here, it functioned as St. Michael's College for Young Ladies until almost the end of the century.

Acquired by the Waifs and Strays Society in 1899, it took in the first of its new residents in 1900 - twentytwo girls 'rescued from immoral surroundings'. Numbers increased to forty but in the 1920s the type of occupant changed to girls

who were orphans or from motherless homes. In 1931 boys were admitted from similar backgrounds, but by 1933 the Waifs and Strays were preparing to close St. Michael's as a Home.

In that year it was put forward that the building should become a Public Elementary (C. of E.) School for 120 day pupils from the area. This proposal did not materialise. The building was put up for sale at £1,200, but there do not appear to have been any takers, and the building remained unoccupied until 1939 when it was used by Basque boys, refugees from the Spanish Civil War.