

## WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

At the January meeting Geoffrey Woolcock of Chadlington spoke on 'One Hundred Years of Family Farming'. The 100 years in question were those since 1888 when his father moved his farming business from Cornwall to Oxfordshire. The move, by rail, was carried out overnight, lock, stock and barrel. At that time Cornwall was even poorer than Oxfordshire, and other farmers moved into this area. Since then there have been many vicissitudes in the farming industry due to wars, drought, slumps, surpluses, fixed prices etc., and Geoffrey gave us a fascinating glimpse into those times which have also seen huge changes in farming practices away from the days when the industry depended on steam, horse and man-power.

Jenny Edwards and Geoffrey Howarth spoke of 'Ditchley Park and the Ditchley Foundation' at the February meeting, beginning with the Lee family in Elizabethan times when the building lay within the Royal Forest. The Tudor building was demolished early in the 18th century and the present structure built at the behest of the 2nd Earl of Lichfield. The property remained in the hands of the Lichfields and Dillons until 1936, when it was bought by Ronald Tree, which led to the war-time visits of Winston Churchill. In 1953 Ditchley Park was bought by David Wills who later gave it to the Ditchley Foundation for use as an Anglo-American conference centre. Its scope has since widened and now caters for high level conferences in the setting of an English country house.

'Town versus Gown in Oxford' was the title of Chris Day's talk to the March meeting, and concerned the struggle for power between the university and the city. To keep law and order, each maintained a separate police force, as well as operating its courts to administer justice. These separate courts also gave judgements on commercial practices - who should be allowed to trade and with whom, and who should control the standards of finances of the markets. The 'battle' for supremacy often grew intense and led to riots of a serious nature with several deaths resulting. But it was not until the late 18th century that any real attempt was made to bring together the two powers in Oxford. Even then, it was not until 1868 that a combined police force was established. Rivalry, not riots, continue.

From 18th May the Society will have a display in the showcases in the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Westgate Library, Oxford. Please look in if you are in Oxford - entry is free.

The last of this season's meetings will be 'Members Evening and Quiz' at Milton Village Hall on 11th May. By this time the latest edition of 'Wychwoods History' should be available. This comes free to those who have paid the current subscription. Full details of publications and membership from Margaret and Frank Ware, Monks Gate, High Street, Shipton-u-Wychwood, OX7 6BA. (0993) 830494.

The 1993/4 season of monthly meetings will begin at Milton Village Hall on 14th September, when there will be the Annual General Meeting (usually short) followed by a talk (usually long) by John Rawlins on 'Local Building Changes since 1880'. Old and new members welcome, as are visitors.