

## Wychwoods Local History Society

Although "Deserted Medieval Villages in the Wychwood Area" was the title of the talk at the March meeting, the speaker, Tim Copeland ranged from Iron Age settlements to those of the last century from which their original inhabitants had left. Reasons for desertion ranged from change of ownership to changes in agricultural practices which meant that the settlements were uneconomic, so a move elsewhere became necessary. Some of the deserted settlements have documentary evidence, while many show visual evidence today where the natural landscape has been changed by human occupation. These can be seen where ploughing has brought up stonework etc. from a previous site of buildings, or in 'humps and bumps' where ruined settlements have been covered with layers of soil and vegetation.

This society has located other sites of previous human habitation by 'Field Walking' which you will find described in Volumes 4, 6, 8, and 14 of Wychwoods History.

**Guided walk.** On Saturday 12 June, Charlie Chambers will lead a walk at Chalford deserted medieval village near Enstone. 10 am to 12 noon. £1.50. Members and non-members welcome. Further details – Sue Jourdan 830179.

**'Humps and Bumps'** survey at Ascott Manor on 10, 11 & 12 October led by James Bond. Further details – Sue Jourdan 830179

At the April meeting Malcolm Graham spoke about "Pictures from the Past – Henry Taunt and his photographs of Oxfordshire". Henry Taunt was born in Oxford in 1842 and began his working life at the age of 10 and by 1856 was working as a photographer's assistant when photography was in its infancy. After a number of similar jobs Henry Taunt set up his own business in the 1860s, when it was hard work carrying around 16" by 14" glass plates for each photograph. As each plate had to be developed immediately after exposure it was also necessary to carry around a mobile darkroom. As improvements were made with equipment and processes, and the advent of the picture post card, Henry Taunt's business prospered. He photographed the River Thames and most of Oxfordshire although he seems to have missed much of the Wychwoods. However he did take 15 photos of Shipton but none of the other local villages. Examples of Henry Taunt's work can be seen at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Westgate, Oxford, where Dr. Malcolm Graham is Chief Librarian.

The next season of monthly talks begins at Milton Village Hall on Thursday the 16th of September when Barry Davis will speak on "The History of Bells and Bell-ringing".