

A Hole in the Roof

The new season of talks begins on Wednesday, September 14, when the life of Benjamin Bevan one of Leighton Buzzard's cleverest men will be revealed. His work is widely celebrated in the annals of engineers and geologists but his talents are hardly known or appreciated in the town where he lived and worked in the early 19th Century.

It has been a busy summer for the enthusiastic researchers of the society and the archaeologists, who have again been digging away at a site in Hockliffe. Members investigating World War One for the Society's proposed book on the subject have twice visited the Record Office in Bedford and found a range of documents about the sand industry and some pictures previously not published. Further work was carried out at the Record Office in Kew and two members went on a pioneering trip to Doncaster. The object was to see documents about a company called Bullivants that once operated a factory in Grovebury Road and made submarine netting. Here, unlike the state of the art computerised records at Kew, the record office was in a derelict school and had a hole in the roof. The staff members were extremely helpful, however, and new information about war work in Leighton Buzzard was uncovered, along with original drawings. Members were allowed to stand on a chair to take a picture of a very long sketch of a steamship laying a submarine net that had been made in Leighton Buzzard.

At the same time the work of another group transcribing documents from the vaults of one of the local banks about the former Sandhouse Inn on the A5 continues. This exciting project is an unfolding drama like a saga from Dickens with disputed wills and eloping heiresses.

The Society is also engaged on a project looking at an ancient timber framed property in Hockliffe Street. This is one of the earliest buildings in the town apart from the two churches of St Mary's and All Saints. Eventually there will be an exhibition of the work.

A team is also looking at creating an exhibition of the history of some of the existing and former pubs in the town for the Living History event at the autumn half term, which is the last week in October.

As the autumn programme begins any members who want to write something for the annual journal, Transactions, is urged to start now. There is plenty of time, the deadline is December 31, but there is no time like the present to start.

Pictures and illustrations are welcome.

Paul Brown