



Buckfastleigh and District Society Newsletter

Issue 14

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Welcome to our Newsletter

We are very pleased to be able to welcome some new members who have joined us over the past few months. Just a reminder that membership subscriptions are due in January. The membership/programme cards for those who paid at the AGM will be delivered at that time.

Previous meetings

Since our last Newsletter in September we have also had a fascinating talk on Buckfastleigh Caves by Sheila Phillips from the Pengeley Trust..

The AGM held on 18th October saw some changes in the members of your Committee. Pat Hedges, Marilyn Coles, Chris Routley and Chris Meathrel have all resigned from the Committee and we would like to express our thanks to them for all their hard work on our behalf. We welcome two new members on to the Committee; they are Kate Goulden and Celia Lebbon. Janet Harris will become Minutes Secretary, while Ann Armstrong and Cathie Sparkes (in an ex-officio) role will deal with the rest of the administration. In addition Chris Routley has said he would continue with the photographic work he is doing for the Local History Group.

Our next events

'Mines in Buckfastleigh and Ashburton' will be the subject of our talk by Phil Newman from English Heritage on 8th November.

A Reminder that in December we will be holding a Local History Group Social evening. There will be a display of local photographs, a quiz; and refreshments will be provided. Do come along.

We will begin the New Year with a talk from PCSO Doug McCance.

In February 2007 we will hold a Public Meeting for the

Millennium Green Trust and this will be followed by a talk from a parfumer and gemstone expert.

Our Easter Egg Hiunt will be on Saturday March 15th. Then, on Friday April 25th, thinking caps on, for our Annual 'Brain of Buckfastleigh' Quiz.

Orchard Millennium Green

The vandalised tea hut has now been repaired and the other shed has recently been moved to its new location.

Buckfastleigh Remembered

Chris Routley has written about his memories of the Mill Fire Brigade. Photo shows Chris at Glebelands wearing Fire Brigade uniform

He says "When I was working in the Higher Mill sorting and grading department I was asked along with my mate Dave Elliott who worked in the Tanyard if we



would like to join the Mill Fire Brigade as they had a couple of vacancies. So we went to the fire station after work down at the Lower Mill to enlist, there we met Ron Inch the captain in charge and his second in command Cecil Major. Ron then told us we would need to pass a test to get in. This involved being able to hold a hosereel & branch single handed to a pressure of 120 lbs for a test period and provided we could do the fireman's lift (this involves carrying someone on your back down a ladder). Ron then told us we would get a small retainer every six months and we would be entitled to two pairs of shoes which we would pick out of a book that he supplies and also we would get a ticket from the Mill office to go to the men's drapery department to be measured for our uniform trousers. We would get two pairs of these a year. We were then issued with our belt

and axe, peak cap and very heavy fireman's coat, a pair of leggings and a pair of Wellington boots. We were then introduced to the rest of the crew who were at that time: - Bill Thompson, Edwin (Jammy) Nolan, George Reed, (Big) Dennis Lee, Roger Dannan, Roy Cottle, George Pullman and Reynold Lock. All training and drills were to be carried out in our own time after work. We were then told, as the youngest members of the crew, we had to pull and steer the pump. The pump was a hand-drawn Dennis Pax with a Coventry Climax engine. There was a single shaft coming out of the centre with a tee piece across the front. My position was on the left-hand side, Dave was on the right and he had to operate a parking brake as well as hold the balance and help to steer the pump. On the four corners of the pump there were ropes, some of the crew had to man the front ropes and help pull the pump and the men on the back ropes were there as brakes and had to hold the pump back when going down slopes. The pump had only two wheels so there were four jacks that held it upright when it was parked up but before you could pull it you had to let these jacks off and balance it on the shaft. I remember the first time we were put in the shafts for a practice session as novices. We were not ready for the weight of the pump and when they released the jacks the pump tilted backwards and lifted us up in the air hanging on to the shaft which caused great laughter within the crew as they knew what would happen if not prepared properly. We soon learnt our lesson and got over that hurdle pretty quickly. Training was very important as each man had to know his place in case of a real situation."

We will continue with Chris' memories in our next Newsletter.

For information on the Society's activities, please contact Ann Armstrong on (01364) 642839