

## **General Editor's Report**

The General Editor opened his report by stating that properly speaking, the report related to the calendar year ending on 31 December 2007. However, as usual he would also take the opportunity to bring the members up-to-date with progress since the beginning of 2008.

The main success of 2007 had been in raising funds to undertake a new index to the archdeaconry of Berkshire probate records. Berkshire had a particularly fine collection of probate records, dating from 1508 to 1858. However, the index for the first period, 1508-1652, had been produced over one hundred years ago and was very inadequate. A new index was certainly needed – but it would be a major task to compile one. There were for this period in excess of 11,000 filed wills, 4,200 filed admmons, and some 9,050 pages of registers. It had been decided that the only way of producing an index to the required standard and within a reasonable time-scale was to employ an experienced archivist, scholar or professional indexer to do the job – but it had been estimated that this would cost some £30,000. He was delighted to report that the Council's application to the Marc Fitch Fund for support had resulted in a grant of £10,000 – the largest that they awarded – and with further support from Berkshire Record Office, the Berkshire Family History Society and the Oxfordshire Family History Society the Council had almost reached their target, and were now beginning the process of recruitment. It was hoped that work could start this summer. This project would be the first part of a long-term plan to publish a new index to the whole collection, though he added that the plan was to use volunteers to work on the later periods, as the existing indices were significantly better and would provide a sound basis for revision – unlike the extremely deficient index to the earliest period.

To set against this success, he had, with regret, to report that no volume in the general series had been issued during 2007. He had also to say that the hoped-for edition of 'Swing Riots' papers had been again delayed on account of the ill-health of the editor. However, the Council had every expectation of bringing out at least three volumes this year. Two of these would contain the minutes of the Thames Navigation Commissioners and their committees, 1771-1790. Part one was at the printers at that time; part two was well advanced, and was expected to go the indexer within the following few weeks, and to the printers once the indexing was complete. He would not say more about that at the meeting, as he had written about it in the newsletter which had been distributed to the members earlier in the year. The third volume to appear would be a joint volume with the Society's sister society in Oxfordshire – the Diocese Books of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford 1845-1869, edited by the Wilberforce scholar Ronald Pugh. Wilberforce was a towering figure in the nineteenth-century church, and there could be few parts of his large diocese that were untouched by his energy and reforming zeal. His diocese books gave a fascinating insight into his episcopate, and the Council was delighted that this joint venture made it possible to bring this edition to the members. This volume was also at the printers: he had received proofs in the post that morning.

Beyond this, the Council expected to publish Kate Tiller's edition of the Berkshire religious census either later that year or early in 2009, and there were many other volumes in the pipeline, including Joan Dils' edition of the churchwardens' accounts of St Laurence, Reading, about which the members would be hearing later.

The General Editor finished by reporting progress on the second edition of the Berkshire Atlas. Letters of invitation have been sent to contributors, and articles are beginning to be received by the joint editors, Joan Dils and Margaret Yates. This will be both revised and enlarged, with several new articles. It is hoped to publish it towards the end of 2009.