

## Occasional Newsletter: Number One - Autumn 2005

At one of its recent meetings some members of Council expressed concern that we had little contact with the Society apart from annual general meetings which only a comparatively small number of people are able or wish to attend. We had hoped to arrange a celebration during the summer to launch the next volumes in the Record Series but unfortunately this had to be postponed owing to problems with printing.

Fortunately these have been solved and we are pleased to announce that the volumes are now ready. Entitled *Berkshire Non-Conformist Meeting House Registrations, 1689-1852*, they have been edited by Lisa Spurrier. Two volumes, 9 and 10 in the Record Society Series, are needed to cope with the amount of material involved. The certificates resulted from the Toleration Act of 1689, which allowed protestant non-conformists to worship provided that their premises were licensed by either Quarter Sessions or the Church authorities. The volumes cover the whole of the ancient county for almost two centuries and include material from a number of repositories, making them of great value to those researching the history of their community as well as to historians of religion. The fact that they were often signed by several members of a congregation makes them useful for family historians.

The Council is delighted to invite you to the launch of the volumes at the Berkshire Record Office, Coley Avenue, Reading on **Monday 24 October** from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. We do hope you will be able to come; if so please return the tear-off slip at the bottom of this letter. You will be able to collect your volumes at this event.

In the meantime, perhaps we can bring you up to date about our plans for the future. We hope the next volume to appear will be *The Thames Navigation Commissioners' Minutes 1771-1790*, an edition of the first two volumes of the minutes of the body responsible for improving the locks and other aspects of travel on the river, effectively converting it into a navigable waterway and facilitating waterborne traffic as far as the Midlands and beyond. Others to appear shortly after that will be one including important papers concerning the Swing Riots in Berkshire and another on the visitation of Archdeacon Randall to the parish churches of the county just prior to the date when many of them were 'energetically' restored by the Victorians. A volume on the 1851 religious census is also in the Society's plans for the near future.

We hope some of you will be at the day school organised jointly by the Record Society, the Berkshire Local History Society and the School of Continuing Education of the University of Reading to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of W G Hoskin's *The Making of the English Landscape*. It is being held on the Saturday, 12th November at the superb new home of the Museum of English Rural Life in Redlands Road, Reading.