

**FURTHER NOTES ON THE EARLY YEARS OF THE
HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB, AND ON THE
ORGANISATION OF FIELD MEETINGS.**

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THE perusal of the article by Dr. Williams-Freeman appearing in the last issue of our *Proceedings* on "The Early Days of the Hampshire Field Club" must have given great pleasure to our members, and more particularly to those whose membership extended over all the period dealt with by the author, namely, since the Club was twenty-one years old. It is possible that an account giving personal recollections of incidents connected with the inception of the Club and its foundation in 1885, and the discharging of the pleasant duties of Local Honorary Secretary for the Isle of Wight Division of the County since 1886 may also be a matter of interest to the members, forming as it were an appendix—or more correctly a preface—to the paper so ably written by Dr. Williams-Freeman.

Dealing first with the inception of the Club, it must be remembered that in the latter half of the Victorian times there had been brought about a widening outlook on many subjects coming within the scope of the Club's possible activities. A sincere appreciation of the merits of the arts and crafts of earlier times became apparent, and logical deductions arising from the careful observation of the operation of natural laws were no longer regarded as meriting discouragement. Natural History in all its branches and antiquities of every kind were receiving an increasing measure of attention, and in many of the Counties of England clubs were formed for the purpose of encouraging such studies. The designation of "Field Club" was usually adopted for an organisation of this kind—one of the objects of which was the making of excursions into the countryside for the pursuit of what is now covered by the hackneyed term "Nature Study." To a few friends resident at that time in Southampton and its neighbourhood the idea had occurred that a similar Club could with mutual advantage be formed in Hampshire.

The first Minute Book of our Club contains a record of the preliminary meeting which was held at the Hartley Institution, Southampton, on March 28th, 1885, of persons interested in the proposed Club, and it is further recorded that this meeting was arranged by Mr. T. W. Shore (the Secretary) and was held in his official room at the Institution. The names of five persons present are recorded as follows: The Rev. T. Woodhouse, of Ropley;

the Rev. W. L. W. Eyre, of Swarraton ; Mr. W. Whittaker (H.M. Geological Survey), of Southampton ; Mr. Ernest Westlake, of Fordingbridge, and Mr. T. W. Shore ; and further that it was unanimously resolved " That a Society to be called The Hampshire Field Club be formed for the purpose of studying the Natural History and Antiquities of the County." A circular was issued and sent to persons who might be desirous of joining the Club. Thus our Club was born on the 28th March, 1885, or, as Mr. Shore told me some time afterwards, " a few of us went into my room to talk this over and we came out of the room as The Hampshire Field Club." The Minute book shews that there was an immediate and encouraging response to the circular by persons resident in all parts of the County.

In the early part of 1885 I went to live in Southampton and remained there until the autumn of the following year, and while so resident I joined the Club and attended its meetings, at which were formed friendships the memories of which are greatly treasured. In addition, I well remember accompanying Mr. Shore on some of his local explorations, as his knowledge of the features of Old Southampton was virtually complete. The interiors of nearly all the bonded vaults under the houses on the west side of Lower High Street were visited and the features of the structures dating usually from Norman times were duly noted. It must be remembered that the despoiling of the older parts of the town had not then begun. Simnel Street, with the barrel-roofed vaulting under some of the houses, and Blue Anchor Lane, with its old wooden houses, were untouched by the pickaxes of the " improvers," and at places one could still see, and walk along, the passages used in olden times by the men-at-arms guarding parts of the Western Town Walls.

An appreciation of the attainments of Mr. Shore is effectively expressed in the memorial volumes which were issued by the Club after his death, but there are a few personal notes which may here be added. Mr. Shore had been endowed with that rare and priceless gift of genial and kindly courtesy which always ensured the ready co-operation of all to whom the furtherance of the objects of the Club made any sort of appeal. Not only was he a keen judge of human character, but he had a wide outlook on life based on a sound knowledge of many branches of Natural Science. To his personality was largely due the early and continued increase in the Club's membership and to the position it attained as a County organisation of importance and influence—which position it devolves on the members to see is duly retained and is always maintained.

But it is in regard to the actual organisation and arranging the details of the Field excursions that these notes are intended principally to deal, as it seems unlikely that any hints of suggestions

dealing with such a matter have ever appeared in print. The arranging and planning of the excursions is not a trivial task, and I know that Mr. Shore had to learn in a very exacting school—that of “trial and error”—and the results of the lessons resolved themselves into two groups, essentials and inhibitions. The present writer and other helpers were always able to call on Mr. Shore for advice and assistance whenever it was found necessary to do so, and he was always ready to formulate plans and suggest routes so that the comfort and benefit of the members might be ensured.

I left Southampton and returned to live in the Island in September 1886, and before leaving Mr. Shore said to me, “We will appoint you Local Honorary Secretary for the Isle of Wight Division of the County and we will have at least one Field Meeting of the Club in the Island each year.” That arrangement was duly carried out—indeed in several years it has been possible to hold more than one meeting in the Island. It is needless for me to record with what pleasure these visits of the Club to the Island have been anticipated each year. To remove any misunderstanding, it is desired to make it clear that originality is not claimed by the writer in respect of any of the suggestions as to direction of Field meetings or excursions. They are all the result of experiences originally gained under the tuition of Mr. Shore than whom no more genial or more capable guide could ever be found in respect of the study of Natural Sciences in the Field and in the furtherance of the love of antiquities and of the English countryside. Nor must any of these notes be taken adversely to reflect in the smallest degree on the capabilities of those members who have been good enough to organise the hundreds of Field meetings which have been held during the Club’s existence.

In planning a Field meeting it has been found desirable to spread the interest as widely as possible over the subject-matters the study of which is the main desire of the members. Such an excursion may be regarded as a “General Purpose” meeting; in addition there are “Special Purpose” meetings such as Botanical excursions or Fungus Forays or Geological meetings, obviously of particular interest only to those members who are students of the special subjects. In every case the published programme must be carried out in its entirety—there must be no variation in any material particular as it is always possible that a member may be intending to join the party at some intermediate stage of the day’s proceedings and would have just cause for complaint if, without notice, the published plan of the meeting had not been adhered to. If the Director has reason to think that an alteration may be necessary on account of adverse weather or some other cause, it is essential to incorporate in the printed programme the statement that it is issued “subject to variation.”

A good idea is first to plan (on paper) the meeting in reverse order, starting with the arrival home and working out the whole scheme backwards, ending with the time of the departure in the morning. This will shew if the plan is too comprehensive and whether any, and if so which, of the items in the scheme should be deleted so as to avoid the obnoxious tendency to have to hurry at any period during the day. Being quite satisfied as to this, the Director can then put the plan into proper form and the sequence of the details can be settled. No programme should ever be issued unless and until the Director has personally been over the ground and checked on the spot all the details beforehand, particularly the timing of the journeys between the points or places to be visited. As to this timing, the Director naturally will consult the proprietor of the garage from whom the motors are to be hired—or better still the drivers themselves.

The years covered by these notes include the changes from the slower horsed vehicles to the speedy and reliable motors, and it may be well for a few words on the earlier methods of transport to be put on permanent record. Indeed our Club has used three phases of transport, as the earliest programmes shew that usually the members went by train to the area to be visited and then did quite a good amount of walking. Then horsed vehicles in the form of brakes or charrs-a-banc came into general use, and those indeed were the days when the troubles of Directors were most manifest. There were no tarred surfaces to the roads which were dusty in dry weather and muddy in rainy times, and when the road was hilly it was customary for the male members to be asked kindly to get out of the vehicles and walk up the hill to relieve the horses. The questions always troubling the Director were not only as to the probable state of the roads, but also as to the speed and mobility of the unfortunate horses by which the motive power was furnished. Ample time margins had always to be allowed—and the adequacy of such margins was always a source of anxiety to the Director. With the advent of the motors conditions underwent a complete change—the surfaces of the roads were tarred or otherwise treated so that there was practically no dust, and if the route be hilly it makes little difference to the engines. It is always well to give to each chauffeur a print of the programme with all the times of arrival and departure and other details noted in the margin. Each man therefore knows exactly what he has to do. It is an axiom that the speed of the Club (on foot) is that of its slowest member, but at Field meetings it is essential that there should be nothing in the way of dallying. This can be avoided by the discreet use of the whistle at the proper moment, and there should never be occasion to make the objectionable request to the members to “hurry up.” All the Director should have to do is to see that punctuality in every respect is meticulously observed by the members and particularly by himself.

It is sincerely to be hoped that nothing in these notes can be construed as being other than simply a record of relevant memories of the earliest years of the Hampshire Field Club and of its operations, and also personal recollections of the attributes of the genial friend to whose foresight was chiefly due its inception. Its future welfare and prosperity should, and doubtless will, be the primary object of all its members, present and future, who together form an organisation of importance, having for its chief object the preservation from further spoliation of the natural features and the antiquities for which our County (including the Island) is so justly famous.