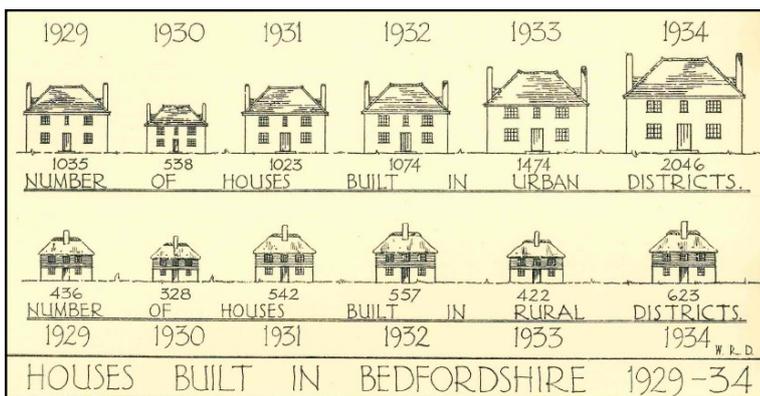


**Between the Wars: Homes for Heroes**

The latest free exhibition at Bedfordshire Archives tells the story of the treatment of servicemen on their return home from the Great War and how life changed as the Second World War approached.

Lloyd George's aspiration to 'make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in' was a call to improve the lives of those returning home and the physical buildings were a part of this. Building work had been at a virtual standstill, but the interwar years saw an unprecedented increase in house building nationwide. In 1919 eight million homes were fit for occupation by 1939 this figure had risen to 12 million. Taken from the 1937 Regional Planning report the chart copied here shows the number of houses built in Bedfordshire between 1929 and 1934. Due to the amount of building work that took place the brick industry prospered and by 1936 Stewartby had become the largest brickworks in the world with 2,000 employees and producing 500 million bricks a year.



The houses that were being built were smaller than their predecessors of the Edwardian and Victorian eras and with the creation of the national grid in 1926 electricity became more widespread in homes. In 1920 only 6% of homes were connected to a supply, but by the start of the Second World War this had risen to two thirds.

But home was more than just bricks and mortar. It was also about the lives that people were living.

Post War the availability of labour was a problem, especially in the farming industry. One solution to the issue was the 1919 Land Settlement (Facilities) Act which allowed counties to buy land to provide smallholdings for returning soldiers to rent. The exhibition includes a copy of a letter to Lloyd George from George Coleman of Coventry Road, Bedford setting out his circumstances and complaining about the way he is being treated. It looks like it worked because the 1920 electoral register shows Mr Coleman with land at Baker's Road, Great Barford.

The slideshow in the reception area shows how leisure changed and includes images of various pursuits, including swimming, cinemas and a horse watching a group of men playing dominoes in The Balloon, Foster Hill Road, Bedford! (Z50/9/878/5) At this time the number of public libraries also increased. By 1926 there were 36 Library Centres in the county and stock had increased from 3,671 volumes to 8,074. Letters in the correspondence files of the County Librarian give us an insight into the lives of the people using the Service. One letter tells of a dog eating a copy of 'The Honour of the School' by May Wynne. The author says that he believes the dog is well fed so presumes that it has 'such a literary taste he was simply "devouring" the excellent yarn'.



The interwar years were a time of change in all areas of life. Housing, employment and leisure all transformed to try and bring Lloyd George's aspiration to fruition and the exhibition aims to reflect some of those changes.

**Carol Walden, Archivist**

## Working flat out! Storing the Franklin, Deacon & Briars architectural drawings

Before being deposited with Bedfordshire Archives, this collection of some 3,600 architectural drawings were stored for many years rolled up, tied with tape and stood on end. This caused considerable damage to the paper and linen substrates. Damp and mice had also attacked some of the bundles making them even more fragile and vulnerable. Rolled storage for plans is OK if you never want use them, in fact for some very large maps and plans rolled storage is the only option. However, anyone who has tried to use a plan that has been stored in this manner knows how difficult that can be; the plan wishes to roll itself back up and has to be weighted down well to prevent this. If one corner escapes from the weights the plan may tear itself in two as the escaped corner rolls up and the weighted corner stays still. For this reason flat storage is preferred but this also has its drawbacks.



We started cataloguing, flattening and putting the drawings into flat storage some time ago but as all the drawings are different in size and vary in materials and fragility retrieving them from the drawers was fraught and we needed a way to make the process easier for staff and less dangerous for the documents.

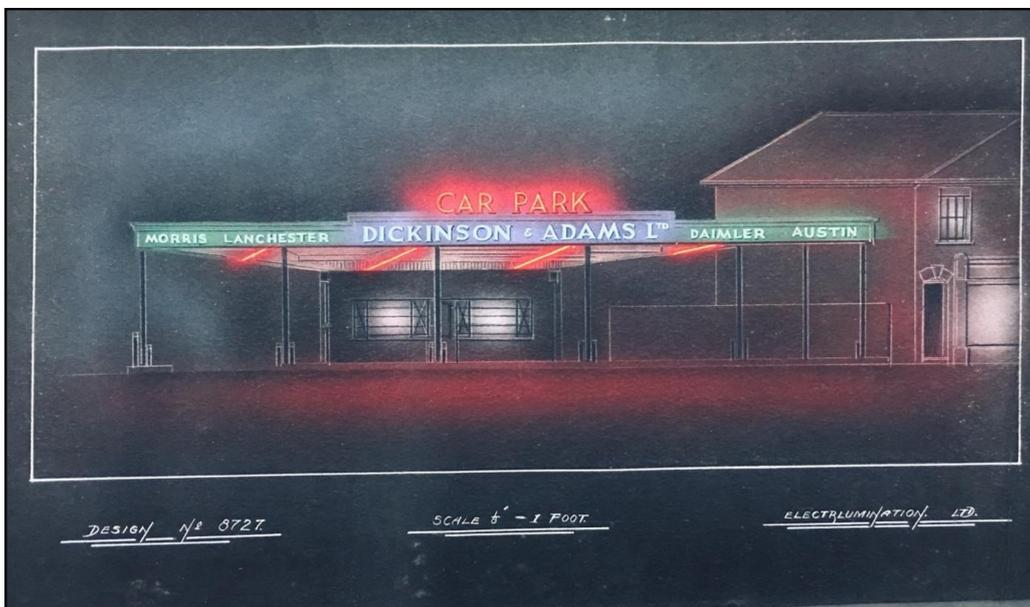


A number of solutions were considered and archive staff and volunteers were asked to try them out and comment on the solution they liked best. Dividing the drawings in the drawers into groups of ten within a large portfolios of stiff conservation-grade card was considered the best option. When costed out we were happy to find that we could just afford this solution from the remaining portion of the 2018/19 conservation materials budget.

**Above:** before and after introducing the new portfolios.

Many thanks to two of our great team of volunteers: Frank, for his work so far cataloguing the collection, and Linda for her work assembling 350 large portfolios!

Alison Faden, Archive Conservator



**Left:** one of our favourites—FDB1/18/96i Electrolumination Ltd's design for lighting proposed petrol station, Bridge St, Luton. c1936

## WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? SCHOOL SPECIAL!

A group of dedicated volunteers have been trying to identify pictures from the former County Council's photographic unit. Despite their best and most diligent efforts, we need your help to work out where these pictures were taken. This time it's a school special. Do any of you recognise the locations of these school pictures? If you recognise the pupils or staff that would be amazing too! Please contact us if you can help.



**Left:** we believe this may be a picture of a school for the daughters of military officers who were based overseas.



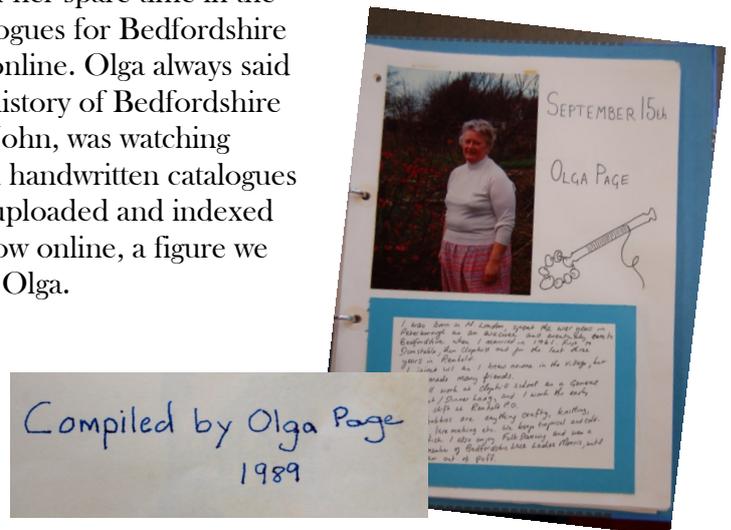
**Left and above:** These two pictures we believe are of the same school, given the location and the wall in the background and the same teacher on the right hand side looking younger in the upper picture. The sleeves of her outfit in the upper picture date it to the 1890s whilst the lower picture is likely to be early 1900s. Some of the children may appear in both.

## NEWS

### Olga Page

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Olga Page. Olga was a stalwart of the Bedfordshire Family History Society and had many other interests besides but some of her spare time in the last few years was given over to word processing old catalogues for Bedfordshire Archives to speed the progress of putting the catalogues online. Olga always said this taught her a lot about our collections and about the history of Bedfordshire and that it gave her something to do when her husband, John, was watching rugby on TV. Working from copies of our old typed and handwritten catalogues Olga would produce Word documents which could be uploaded and indexed on our cataloguing software. 95% of our catalogues are now online, a figure we could not have reached so soon without the assistance of Olga.

We will remember Olga not just for the valuable contribution she made to our service but also because she appears amongst the archives. This scrapbook from Renhold Women's Institute was compiled by Olga in 1989 and deposited by the institute in April 2019.



### **Dying Matters Awareness Week 13-19th May**

The Dying Matters coalition aims to raise awareness about the importance of talking more openly about dying, death and bereavement and of making your wishes known. We felt that Bedfordshire Archives could support this by looking at things from an historical point of view so we are running two events during Dying Matters Awareness Week. We will be at **Bedford Central Library on Monday 13th May** and at **Luton Central Library on Thursday 16th May**. Drop in any time or time your visit to hear one of our 10-minute talks:

11.30am Where There's a Will, 12.00pm Eulogies and Obituaries, 12.30pm Why Reminisce, 13.00pm Memorials, 13.30pm Funeral registers for family history.

Full details on our website <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/ArchiveEvents/EventsExhibitionsandTalks.aspx>

### **You can never have enough plan chests!**

Following the organisation of part of the office space we have been able to acquire some more lovely metal plan chests. Some were bought to replace the wooden cabinets we inherited from one of the schools support services and which we used to house part of the MEPK collection.

If you can think of a use for the old wooden cabinets please contact us before the 30 April.



Free to a good home, buyer collects.

**ARCHIVES CLOSURE WEEK - Monday 29th April to Friday 3rd May 2019** - we are in urgent need of space so we are closing for a week to re-organise our storage areas. We will re-open on Tuesday 7th May as Monday 6th May is the May bank holiday.

We welcome ideas and material for future issues. Published by Bedfordshire Archives Service, Riverside Building, Borough Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP. Tel: (01234) 228833 E-mail: [archive@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk) Online at: [www.bedford.gov.uk/archive](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/archive)

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