



Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service
Annual Report
2011/2012



Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service Annual Report, 2011/12

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Finance**
- 3. Staff**
- 4. Accommodation**
- 5. Collections**
- 6. Public Access**
- 7. Records Management & Deeds Registry**
- 8. For more information**

1. Introduction

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service was the first County Record Office in England. We celebrate our centenary in 2013, and the run-up to this landmark birthday is a good opportunity to look back at what we have achieved as well as looking forward and planning for the future. This annual report for the year 2011/12 is part of that process. It will show what we achieved last year and how that is forming our policy for the future.

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service began in 1913 as Bedfordshire Record Office under Bedfordshire County Council. When Luton Borough Council became a unitary authority in 1997 a joint arrangement was entered into for the Service to continue to provide archives and records management for the entire county. The name of the service was changed to reflect this. In 2009, when Bedfordshire County Council was abolished, a joint arrangement between Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council again ensured that the service could continue to serve the whole county. The current joint arrangement runs until 31st March 2013.

The service is hosted by Bedford Borough Council and sits within the Registration and Records section of the Chief Executive's directorate. As well as a public archives service it provides corporate records management for semi-current files for all three authorities and a deeds registry for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire councils.

2. Finance

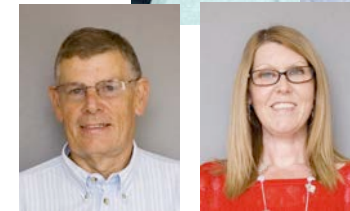
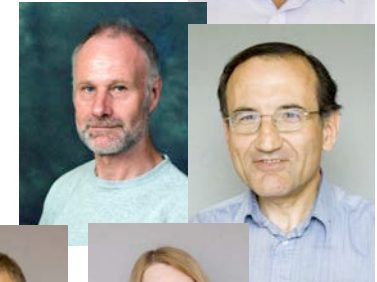
As a shared service our funding is drawn from all three unitary authorities of Bedfordshire based on population. Like all local authority services, we are under pressure to achieve more with a smaller budget, while increasing income where possible.

Account (T)	2008/9 Outturn	2009/10 Outturn	2010/11 Outturn	2011/12 Forecast Full Year	2012/13 Proposed Budget
Employees	£528,645	£441,573	£444,294	£473,387	£438,000
Transport Related Expenditure	-	-	£65	£165	-
Supplies and Services	£29,946	£29,811	£31,302	£21,505	£30,000
Records Management	£44,001	£55,105	£75,448	£59,204	£60,000
National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR)	-	£17,622	-	-	-
Total Expenditure	£602,592	£544,111	£551,109	£554,261	£528,000
Customer and Client Receipts	£32,640	£24,546	£30,694	£24,494	£27,000
NNDR Refund	-	-	£13,216	-	-
National Cataloguing Grant	-	-	-	£19,500	-
High Sheriff's Appeal re above	-	-	-	£3,000	-
Lucas Collection Grant	-	-	-	£5,920	-
Total Income	£32,640	£24,546	£43,910	£46,994	£27,000
Net expenditure	£569,952	£519,565	£507,199	£507,267	£501,000
<u>Grants and Contributions</u>					
Luton Borough Council	£72,743	£49,254	£47,292	£47,277	£46,693
Luton Cultural Services Trust	£187,054	£126,654	£121,606	£121,643	£120,140
Central Bedfordshire Council	-	£206,729	£202,981	£203,008	£200,500
Bedford Borough Council	-	£136,927	£135,320	£135,339	£133,667
Total contributions	£259,797	£519,565	£507,199	£507,267	£501,000
<u>Accommodation contributions</u>					
Luton Borough Council	Not available	£15,574	£16,041	£16,201	£16,201
Luton Cultural Services Trust	Not available	£40,016	£41,216	£41,628	£41,628

3. Staff

2011/12 saw a number of changes to staff:

- At the end of 2010/11 we said goodbye to Trevor Cunnick, latterly our searchroom assistant but previously our stackroom assistant, who took retirement. Ravinder Teji joined us as Trevor's replacement at the beginning of 2011/12.
- In June 2011 Philip Quince, our stackroom assistant since 2005, retired. In April 2012 we welcomed Zoran Klasnic as Philip's permanent replacement.
- Calvin Macey, our records management assistant, changed to part time working in the autumn and Tina Hunter-Goulder joined us on a temporary basis.
- July 2011 saw the beginning of our externally funded Paths to Crime cataloguing project and we recruited two part time cataloguers – Kathryn Faulkner and Sharon Allam.



Work experience

We gave six university students for work experience so that they could explore archives as a career choice. One placement was taken as a module of a university course.

Volunteers

Over the year 14 volunteers worked on a variety of projects for us, including:

- Scanning and cataloguing sections of the large Chrystal postcard collection (Z1306)
- Cataloguing records of Dame Alice Harpur School, Bedford (DAH)
- Sorting and cataloguing a large addition to the London Brick archive (Z41)
- Data entry into our online database of Bedford Gaol registers. 2,546 entries having been added during the year.
- Indexing pre 1912 Carlton Reformatory registers (X521) and Bedford Charity Apprentices register 1761-1814 (X109/1)

A further 8 volunteers worked on the *Paths to Crime* project. Thanks are due to all our volunteers and placements for their work during the year giving us a total of 3,148 hours of their free time.

4. Accommodation

The Service occupies two floors of the Riverside Building Borough Hall. Designed in the mid 1960s and our home since May 1969. In 2010/11 we expanded into those parts of the 2nd floor of Riverside Building previously occupied by other departments and this work continued into 2011/12. This enabled us to:

- rearrange our office areas to improve working conditions,
- open up space in the public areas to improve access to the searchroom,
- create a work area for the *Paths to Crime* project
- provide a small meeting room
- increase capacity for volunteers
- reorganise our collections awaiting processing to improve efficiency
- provide additional storage space for incoming collections and as overflow from the 3rd floor.

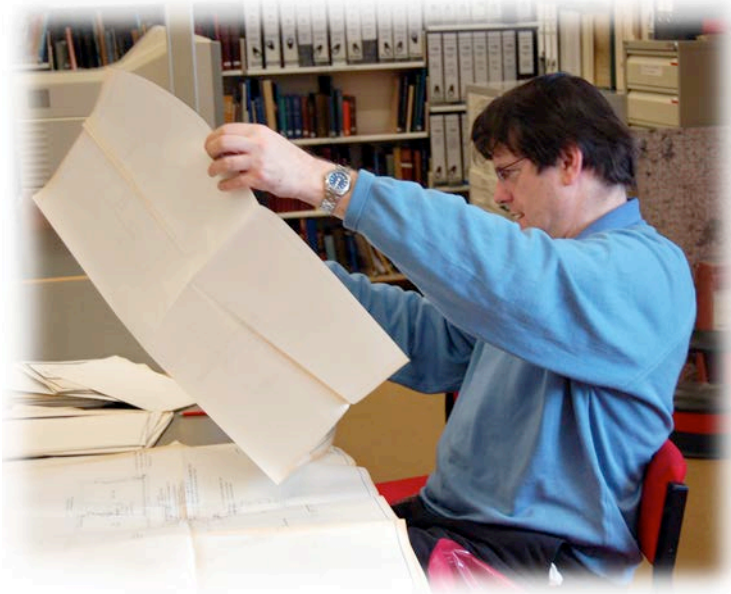
Notwithstanding this the Riverside Building presents challenges to the visitor and now lacks adequate capacity for document storage. We continue to consider possible long-term solutions and this has been raised with our funding partners.

The end of 2011/12 saw the introduction of an intercom system from outside the main front door to our service. A customer survey was carried out to gauge response to its usefulness and the results enabled us to come to an arrangement with our Property Department which we believe provides the easiest access to our service. The intercom is useful on days when we are closed or for enabling people to contact us without having to come upstairs.

We continue to appraise our collections to see if there is anything we don't need to keep. Closed weeks in February 2011 and 2012 enabled us to make significant progress in this and freed up valuable space for new material. Unfortunately shortage of archive storage space has meant that we have had to send more material off site to a private contractor, with its associated delay in getting the material to the customer and costs of off site storage and retrieval when the material is required. So far we have only had to send out low use Bedfordshire County Council material.

Recent research into the benefits of capital investment in Archives concluded that capital investment delivers a significant and broad range of benefits to users, the community, depositors, staff and managers...benefits to the safety and longevity of the collections are also profound. When new archive facilities open demand increases significantly...there is clearly unrealised demand for what archive services can provide...staff of services which received investment gained confidence and continued to achieve, taking on stretching targets and new activities.

<http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/ara-publishes-first-research-into-capital-investment-in-archives.html>



Closed week February 2012

The target was to create 1.5 cubic metres of space.
We created:

- 0.91 m³ by appraising the County Council backlog (left);
- 0.9 m³ appraising South Beds council plans (above) and
- 3.04 m³ by reconfiguring the backlog shelving (right).

The week was of definite benefit to the service and it is recommended that we repeat it in future years.

5. Collections

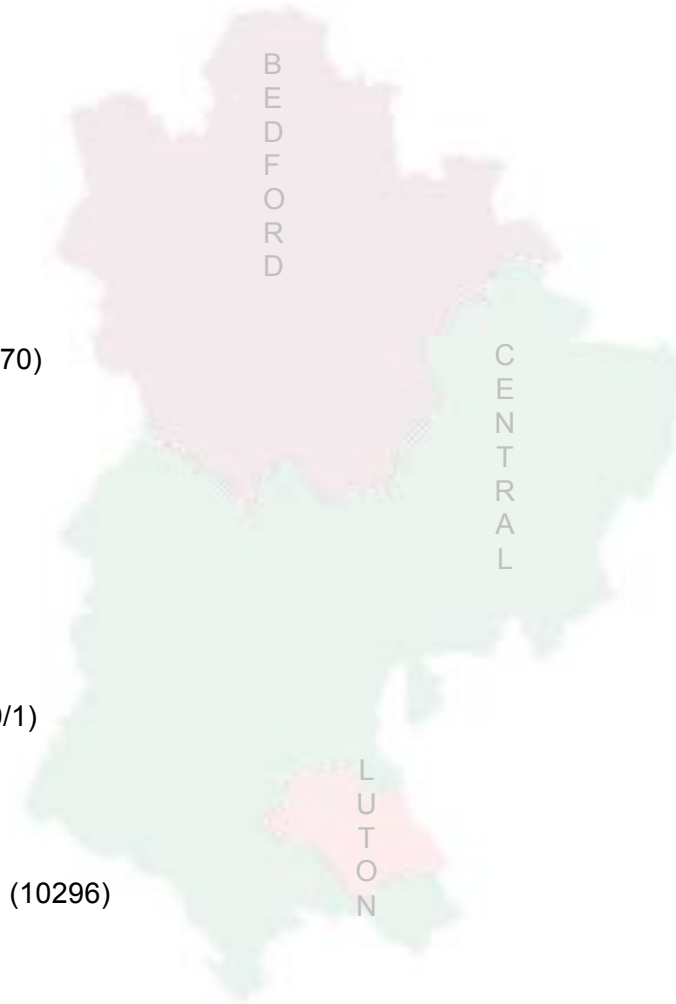
New Accessions

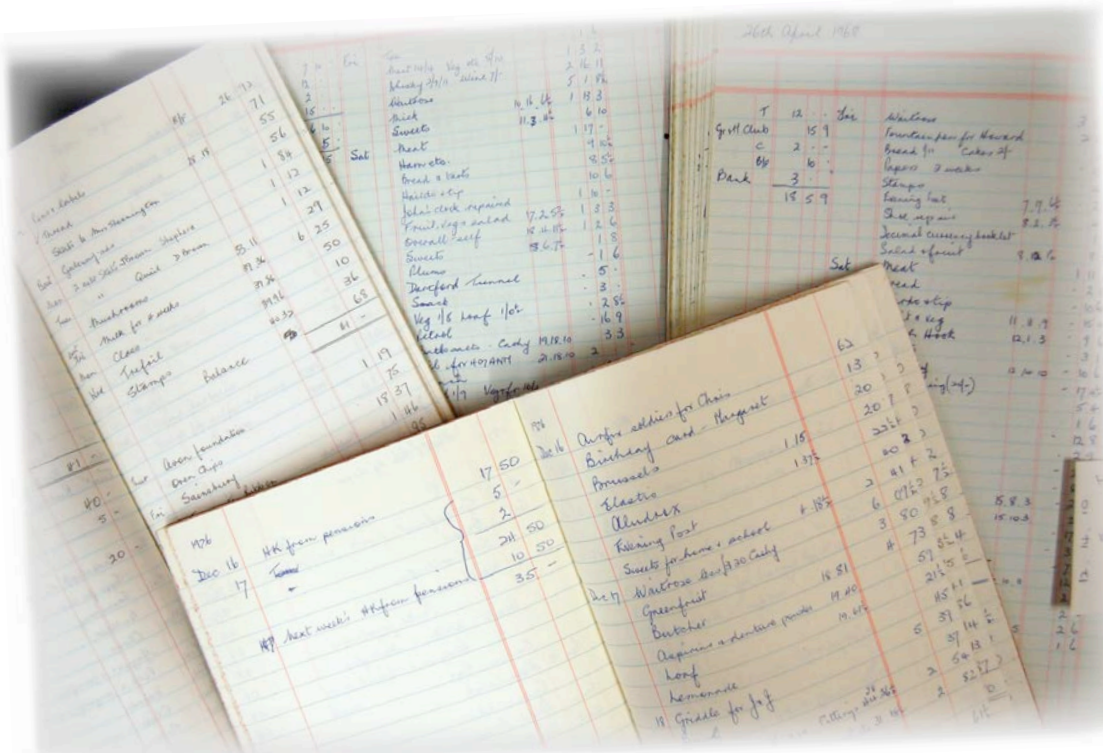
129 new accessions were received this year (approx. 200 large boxes, 4.86m³). As well as regular deposits from official sources such as parish churches and parish councils, this year saw large deposits of committee minutes and papers, 1974-2010, from Bedford Borough Council and deeds, leases and agreements from Central Bedfordshire Council. Private deposits were received from across the county and included a large proportion of 20th century business records as well as records from schools, non-conformist chapels and private individuals. Significant deposits include:

- Grafton Cranes, Bedford: order, specification and test books, 1890s-1960s (10304, Z1473)
- Robert Makeham of Milton Ernest; poetry book, 1857. (10308, Z1474/1)
- Jones family photographs, London and Goldington Bury, c1880-1905 (10313, Z1477)
- St John's Hospital Estate, Bedford: book of property plans, 1887 (10322)
- Business ledger of blacksmith Stanley Litchfield, Riseley, 1933-1965 (10328, Z1485)
- Brickhill, Park Wood and Beauchamp Middle Schools, Bedford, 1960s to c2000 (10332)
- Henry Allen papers, a local West Indian from Bedford (10340)

- Lloyds Pharmacy and predecessors, Leighton Buzzard; prescription books, 1856-1994 (10258, X970)
- London Brick; extensive additional 20thC material (10260, Z41)
- Hawkins of Hitchin, solicitors; client papers and manorial records, c1674-1960 (10291)
- Adlams Solicitors, St Neots (ex Wade-Gery and Brackenbury): client files, 18thC-20thC (10292)
- Clifton and District British Legion, 1933-1974 (10348)
- South Beds Methodist Circuit, 20thC (10353, MB)
- Whitbread Estate; additional material, 19th and 20thC (10307, W)
- Bruce Turvey, photographer, of Dunstable; negatives, prints and index. 1960s on (10314)
- Ongley Arms, Eyeworth; pub accounts, 1949-1980s (10315)
- Magazines of the Dunstable firms: A C Delco, Waterlow and Hawthorn Baker, post 1950 (10317)
- Business ledger of blacksmith Charles Herbert Goodhand, Old Warden, 1897-1926 (10345, Z1490/1)

- Luton, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable licensing registers, 1928-2009 (10242, PS)
- Household accounts kept by Evelyn C. Morris of Dunstable and Luton, 1959-2003 (10344, Z1489)
- City of Hope Jamaican Voices Oral history project recordings and transcripts (10243, Z1453)
- Luton High School for Girls; very extensive pupil records for this and related schools, c1920-1970s (10296)
- Davis Gas Stove Co. Ltd., Luton: business archives, 1904-1960s (10302)
- Luton Association NUT minute books, 1898-1929 (10305, X394)





One thing leads to another...

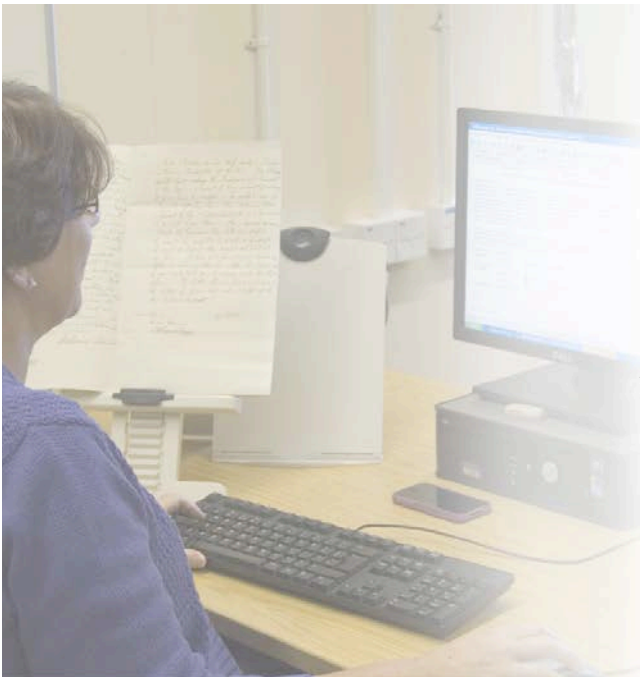
A chance encounter with our stand at the Luton Hoo Pumpkin Gala led to the deposit of detailed household accounts for 1959-2003, which give a glimpse of life from the introduction of frozen foods, the cost of learning to drive, to favourite household gadgets such as the Sodastream. (Z1489)

Examples from Z1489 include:
Airfix soldiers,
a decimal
currency
booklet and
oven chips.

When Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Archives started cataloguing one of their business collections they found that a large quantity of the material was from the Bedford company Grafton Cranes. The material was transferred to us. It contained 56 order books covering almost the entire history of the company from the 1890s to the 1950s, but the first order book was missing. When one of our volunteers heard about the collection he told friends in the Industrial Railway Society who, it turned out, knew the whereabouts of the missing volume, which had been given to an employee as a leaving present when the firm closed in 1978! It has now been deposited with us to complete the picture of this once important local firm. (Z1473)



Z1473 order books reunited.



Cataloguing

Staff and volunteers catalogued 12,274 documents in 139 different collections. The catalogue entry for a document can vary between one line to several pages of text and the sorting of each collection can take anything from a few minutes to several days. We continue to catalogue and index material to the highest international standard so researchers can decide whether they need to see the original; in many cases the catalogue contains all the information they need. Catalogues appear immediately on our online public access catalogue.

At the end of 2010 the National Cataloguing Grant Programme for Archives awarded us a grant of £38,702 to catalogue the Bedfordshire Quarter Session Rolls, 1831-1900. Under the title *Paths to Crime* this two-year project will catalogue approximately 41,000 documents of great use to the family and social historian. Cataloguing began in July 2011 and by the end of March nearly eight thousand documents had been catalogued and this, coupled with the sorting and numbering work carried out by the project volunteers, had already proved its worth in enabling enquiries to be answered efficiently. There is more information on our project work on our website www.bedford.gov.uk/archive.

Conservation

Paths to Crime volunteers sorted and packaged approximately 180 quarters from the Quarter Sessions rolls, much of the packaging needing to be custom made to suit the irregular shapes and sizes of the documents. We would like to thank everyone involved with this project, including sponsors who made contributions towards the costs of re-packaging this important set of documents.

During the year we were awarded a grant of £5,920 by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust towards the conservation of the Lucas collection of approximately 240 architectural drawings and watercolours (L33 collection) relating to the nationally important house and gardens at Wrest Park. The grant enabled the employment of a contract conservator to repair and repackage the damaged drawings, while a volunteer cleaned, carried out minor repairs and repackaged the rest of the drawings.

At the end of the year we began the digitisation of our 1925 rating valuation reference maps (DV2). The unusual format of the maps and the heavy use to which they have been subjected over the years has caused considerable damage to them. Full conservation would have been extremely costly so providing surrogates in a digital form was considered the most appropriate and cost-effective option.

While we aim to take all the precautions we can to avoid disasters, we still need to be prepared should disaster strike. In January we reviewed our business continuity plan and updated our salvage plan. All staff received training on the revised plan so that they know what to do should an incident occur.





Sharon & Kathryn with celebration cakes on launch day, July 2011.



Volunteers Sue and Wendy discuss *Paths to Crime* numbering.

External funding helped us make significant progress in collection care during the year.

In addition to grants from the National Cataloguing Programme for Archives for *Paths to Crime* (left) and the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust for L33 (below) we entered into an agreement with The National Archives to provide support for the updating and digitisation of the Manorial Documents Register for Bedfordshire. The National Archives are providing the £40,000 funding for the 13-month project, which commenced in May 2012.

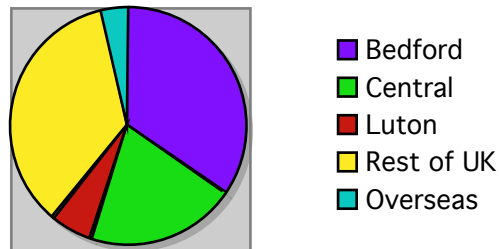


Repairing tears on a 19th century design for the Wrest Park terrace.

6. Public Access

In common with other record offices we are experiencing new trends in public access. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the number of on-site visitors increased as the popularity of family history research grew and many people found they had more time for such leisure activities. In recent years the availability of information via the internet has meant that, although interest continues to increase, fuelled by television programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, people no longer need to pay a physical visit to see original sources. This has led to a fall in visitor numbers to the public searchroom. There were 2637 visitors in 2011/12, against 3194 in 2010/11 and 3377 in 2009/10. However, we are finding that because our visitors have often carried out the easy part of their research online when they do come to see us it is with more complex enquiries, which require more staff time in assisting them. The number of documents retrieved from the stacks for consultation in the searchroom broadly reflects the same trend: 16040 in 2011/12, against 17429 in 2010/11 and 17069 in 2009/10.

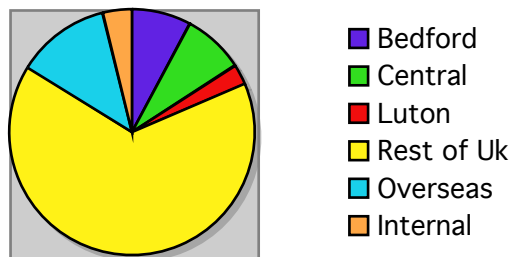
Where visitors came from



Where visitors came from has shown no significant change from previous years. The small proportion of visitors from the Luton area is possibly indicative of a number of factors: the diversity of background of residents making our family history sources less attractive, the access to local heritage information via the Luton Cultural Services Trust museums and local studies and our lack of major Luton planning records. We do hold some uncatalogued South Bedfordshire and Luton Rural District plans and work on sorting these and cataloguing them has been given higher priority in order to ensure that access can be given if needed.

We have put a lot of Luton material on our Community Archives web pages and have catalogued (and where possible digitised) 372 postcards of Luton, mainly dating from 1900-1940, part of the Chrystal postcard collection (Z1306). However, as both these are online resources, this will not increase the need to visit the service. We hope that our major centenary exhibition at Wardown Park museum in 2013 will raise awareness of our service and how it can be used.

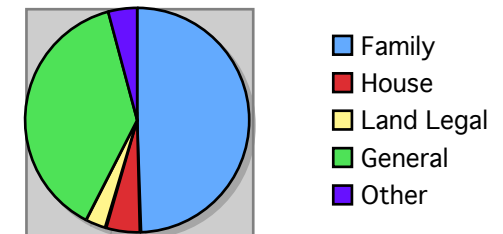
Remote enquiries came from



Staff answered 1836 enquiries that required some degree of detailed advice or research. We receive many enquiries by e-mail and it is not always easy to establish the location of the sender.

Family history research, remains the most popular topic of research. However, in line with the increased availability of on-line sources mentioned above, the proportion has dropped from a high of 60% to 49%.

Subject of research



Home > Community and living > Archives and records service > Community archives > Flitton > Flitton School

Flitton School



The Church Hall October 2010

A directory of 1864 mentions that Mrs. Ann Wheeler was school mistress in the village and it seems likely that this is the first reference to a daily infants' school which must, therefore, have commenced between 1847 (as no such school is mentioned in the national church school survey) and 1864. It probably met in

Introduction Search Results Details Selection Search History

Record 6 of 31

Reference	Z1306/75/10/10/4
Title	View of Chapel Street taken from an upper floor on the west side looking south. The chapel is to the left of the picture. In the centre of the picture is Tram no 7 on its inaugural run in Chapel Street (see Bedfordshire Magazine Vol 26 p 204.)
Date Free Text	21 February 1908
Date From	1908
Date To	1908
Scope and Content	The card is postmarked 7 March 1908 and was sent to Master Ernie Hopps, Woodhall Spa. Message reads: "Dear Ernie, did you say you wanted a ride too, well hurry up I want to go too, we had a ride inside the other night & it was nice but so cold on top from Auntie Lizzie."

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service

Bedfordshire Gaol Register

This database contains entries from gaol registers held by the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS). Levels of detail vary between registers but each entry gives some of the following details of the criminal: name, age, hair colour, height, crime, date of conviction and sentence and means of disposal e.g. release, death, transportation etc. The database presently covers the period between 1801 and 1917, and is updated on a weekly basis. Our aim is to add the details from all the surviving County Gaol and House of Correction registers, most of the period 1801 - 1901, an approximate total of 35,000+ entries.

Please enter your search criteria. You must complete at least one field. Gaol records will be matched against the exact spelling of the entries. If you have any queries please [contact us](#).

Year From: Year To:

Beds & Luton Archive
 @BedsArchives
 Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service - the archives service for the historic county of Bedfordshire. Enquires archive@bedford.gov.uk
 Bedfordshire, England <http://www.bedford.gov.uk/archive>

Paths to Crime

Cataloguing the Bedfordshire Quarter Sessions Rolls 1831-1900

Home Progress so far

THURSDAY, 23 AUGUST 2012

"I'll be damned if I have not shot your daughter"

We don't often come across gun crime in the Quarter Sessions so the shooting of 16 year old Emma Hills of Beeston instantly caught our attention.

PATHS TO CRIME
 Paths to Crime is a free year repackage the Bedfordshire from 1831-1900. This collection is a valuable resource for both

On-line presence

The decrease in physical visits to the service is counter balanced by the use of our service on-line. The number of hits on our website alone totalled 491,454 for the year, against 483,665 in 2010/11, demonstrating the popularity of the more than 3000 pages we now have on the web.

We have:

- Our website, of general information, guides to sources, on-line newsletters, *Paths to Crime* documents of the month, exhibitions and our community archives pages. The site continues to grow and adapt, for example a facility for on-line payments was introduced in May 2011.
- Continued with our programme of adding detailed local material (766 pages in all) to the Community Pages of our website. We added Cardington (53 pages); Eastcotts (58); Dean (50); Flitton (34); Greenfield (27); Hulcote (21); Luton (97, now 310 overall); Oakley (63); Pulloxhill (46); Salford (29) Shelton (21), Ridgmont (53), Husborne Crawley (69), Silsoe (87), Shortstown (11), and Wardhedges (7). There were also additions to: Fenlake, Cople, Old Warden, Shefford, Southill, Stagsden, Stanford and Willington. Each year we aim to add material for areas in each authority. There is anecdotal evidence, through emails and other feedback of the value of these pages, which are the most viewed feature of our website after the front page.
- Our online public access catalogue. All new catalogues are added to this database and we continue to put our old catalogues on too. At the start of the year we had 67% of catalogues online which had risen to 70% by the end of the year. The search facility of our online catalogue has been experiencing technical problems throughout the year but the system has been flexible enough to enable most people to find what they were looking for. A new system is due to launch shortly which we hope will solve the problems.
- The database of the 19th century gaol registers has continued to grow throughout the year and continues to be very popular. There were 39,387 entries at the year end. The schools website which also uses this data also received very favourable feedback.
- Joined Twitter – in November we began to use Twitter to provide news of our service. We tweet at least once a week and by the end of March we were beginning to see the benefits of using this network.
- *Paths to Crime* blog – this is run by the project cataloguers as a quick, easy and permanent way to record some of the many stories and information they discover. As an externally funded project this also helps to meet the requirements for publicity of the funding body.

Feedback

We welcome feedback from customers throughout the year but also take part in the National Survey of Visitors to British archives organised by the Public Service Quality Group every 18 months (last run February – March 2011). 77% of feedback received via both methods was positive. Most compliments show that customers value the close personal attention they receive when staff answer enquiries. We received 3 formal complaints during the year all of which were resolved to the customer's satisfaction by Archive Service staff. In addition we receive some suggestions, generally these are about matters outside of our control however, we do our best to respond and to pass on suggestions where possible.

Outreach

- Talks by staff totalled 22 with a total attendance of 598. A wide variety of topics were covered including Bedfordshire Scandals, a History of Brewing, and Paper Conservation. As part of the *Paths to Crime* project we introduced a programme of regular lunchtime talks primarily aimed at our volunteers to give them training and as a thank you for their time but also open to staff and the general public. We participated in seminar for the UK Centre for Carnival Arts at Luton and received the following feedback 'Thank you so much for your input into UKCCA. People really enjoyed working with the material & the humour and explanation you brought. Thank you for taking so much effort'.
- Visits: there were group visits during the year from Bedford U3A and a group from the Bedford Retirement Centre. In September we held an open house for other staff in the Registration and Records department following their move to Borough Hall, and also welcomed staff from the library hub, so that we could get to know each other and work together more effectively in the future.
- Involvement with the media included a live BBC 3 Counties radio talk on Bedfordshire's *Titanic* connections and assisting a TV company with research for the programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*
- Display work included: the loan of our local Black History panels to Bedford Race & Equality Council, a pub pictures competition at the Bedford Beer & Cider festival, a stand and new 3-panel display on the *Paths to Crime* project for Heritage Open Day in the Town Hall council chamber, and a stand and new displays on the Community Archives webpages and the Chrystal collection at the Pumpkin and Apple Gala at Luton Hoo. The new displays were reused during the December councillors' evening event.
- Our quarterly newsletter was produced as usual and as well as giving updates on our projects and service included articles about: the first traffic lights in Bedford, conservation training, settlement examinations and the *Titanic*. We have a print run of 700 but also deliver the newsletter via e-mail and make it available via the internet.

All our outreach work is delivered by staff alongside their other work as we have no dedicated member of staff for outreach work. If funds permitted we would like to do more work particularly with certain groups such as schools. During the year discussions of a proposed project with one local history group identified the need for an outreach officer and that Heritage Lottery Fund Your Heritage programme could provide funding for such a post. Work began on an HLF application at the end of 2011/12 with a view to submission in 2012/13.



“I certainly do now feel much better informed of what you all do.” Cllr Aldis

We organised two successful evening events (20 June and 14 December) for local Councillors to introduce them to the Service and show how it can help the people they represent. 23 Councillors attended (Bedford 11; Central 10; Luton 2). We are planning a similar event in Luton during 2012.



Outreach events are not all work and no play.



Luton Hoo Walled Garden
Pumpkin Gala, October 2011

7. Records Management & Deeds Registry

The Records Management team have continued their vital work in receiving consignments, managing the storage, retrieval, and when appropriate the transfer or destruction of semi-current internal records of the three funding authorities, including shared ex-Bedfordshire County Council consignments. The team can be contacted by telephone on 01234 228923 or by e-mail at records.management@bedford.gov.uk or see their webpage www.bedford.gov.uk/records

The number of boxes received totalled 12083 and is broken down as follows: Bedford Borough Council: 4177 (34.6%); Central Beds Council: 3962 (32.8%); Luton Borough Council: 2784 (23%) and shared/ex-Bedfordshire County Council: 1160 (9.6%)

The number of files withdrawn totalled 2052, with 707 relating to Bedford Borough Council holdings (34.4%), 1048 to Central Beds Council (51.1%), 129 to Luton Borough Council (6.3%) and 168 (8.2%) to 'shared' files.

The service runs records management for all three Bedfordshire unitary authorities but only runs a deeds registry of title deeds, agreements, leases etc relating to Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. Luton Borough Council operates its own deeds registry.

During 2011/12 3602 items were accessioned to the deeds registry, over 99% of which related to Central Bedfordshire Council. This is a legacy of the very large number of South Bedfordshire District Council (one of the forerunners of Central Beds Council) deeds, leases and agreements transferred to our care.

Of the 601 deed packets consulted during the year 489 (81.4%) related to Central Bedfordshire Council holdings.

8. For more information

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service
Riverside Building
Borough Hall
Bedford
MK42 9AP
Tel: 01234 228833

archive@bedford.gov.uk

www.bedford.gov.uk/archive

[www.Twitter.com/BedsArchives](https://www.twitter.com/BedsArchives)

