

# Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service



## Annual Report 2017/2018



## **Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service Annual Report, 2017/18**

- 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 Archives & Records Service began in 1913 under Bedfordshire County Council. Since 1913 it has provided a public archives service and corporate records management for semi-current files for the county council and its successors - Luton Borough Council, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

The service is hosted by Bedford Borough Council but serves the other two Bedfordshire unitary authorities under service level agreements.

2017/18 was a year where working with depositors and partner organisations was particularly important. Bedford Borough Council continued the transformation programme and senior officer roles within the council were restructured. Our service was moved from the Directorate of Governance and HR (Democratic and Registration Services) to the new Directorate of Customer (Customer Engagement and Digital). This was completed in October and we said goodbye to our former head of service, Keith Simmons, and hello to our new chief officer, Lee Phanco (right), on our 104<sup>th</sup> birthday, marking the occasion with cake.



## 2. Finance

As a shared service our funding is drawn from all three unitary authorities of Bedfordshire based on population. The expenditure shown for 2016/17 does not include capital funds for map storage (see 3. below) or consultancy fees for development of software required as part of a corporate roll out of an electronic document management system, which were borne by Bedford Borough Council. 2018/19 is a standstill budget but staff restructuring during the year may see changes to the budget forecast as the year progresses.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Account (T)	Outturn	Outturn	Outturn	Outturn	Initial forecast*
Employees	£365,270	£362,046	£346,546	£342,784	£350,000
Transport Related Expenditure	£364	£605	£515	£460	£500
Supplies and Services	£20,437	£14,790	£13,560	£15,489	£13,550
Records Management	£94,097	£76,303	£84,928	£84,964	£85,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£480,168</b>	<b>£453,744</b>	<b>£445,034</b>	<b>£443,697</b>	<b>£449,050</b>
Customer and Client Receipts	£33,323	£20,436	£29,997	20,659	£20,000
Donations for cataloguing projects	-			15,000	
East of England Regional Archives Council grant	500				
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£33,823</b>	<b>£20,436</b>	<b>£29,997</b>	<b>35,659</b>	<b>£20,000</b>
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>£446,345</b>	<b>£433,308</b>	<b>£415,037</b>	<b>£408,038</b>	<b>£409,050</b>
<u>Contributions</u>					
Luton Borough Council	£42,578	£41,925	£38,835	41,716	
Luton Cultural Services Trust	£109,487	£107,809	£98,546	105,447	
Central Bedfordshire Council	£182,477	£182,405	£166,732	134,117	
Bedford Borough Council	£111,803	£101,169	£110,923	126,758	
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>£446,345</b>	<b>£433,308</b>	<b>£415,037</b>	<b>£408,038</b>	
<u>Accommodation contributions</u>					
Luton Borough Council	£16,854	£16,854	£16,854	£16,854	
Luton Cultural Services Trust	£43,305	£43,305	£43,305	£43,305	

### 3. Staff

We said goodbye to: Vicki Manners, our conservator, who now works for the Panacea Museum and Ann Jones, who moved to take up a new position within Bedford Borough Council dealing with the implementation of the new Data Protection Regulations.



We welcomed: Carol Walden and Beata Zyzanska on short-term cataloguing contracts made possible by external funding. We also congratulated archivist Rachel Bates on the birth of her son, Joshua.

We provided staff with in-house training and development opportunities. We were particularly grateful to the curators at Woburn Abbey and at Wardown Park, Luton for facilitating group visits by our staff. Both visits gave our staff a better understanding of how our work fits into the work of the other organisations. At Woburn we saw how documents that are usually in our care had been used by the curators in the Woburn Abbey summer exhibition and at Wardown we discussed the complementary strengths and specialisms of our services. Staff came away inspired with new ideas and with a better understanding of how the organisations could work together in the future. The service manager and one of the records managers attended a training day on children's records run by Gloucestershire County Council.



### Work Experience and Volunteers

Six students gained short-term work experience in the service, exploring archives as a career choice. One university student spent two days a week with us over her summer vacation and was of great assistance in the cataloguing of additional material from the Bedfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes.

Over the year 22 volunteers worked on a variety of projects for us, including:

- Cataloguing the Chrystal postcard collection (Z1306), George Kent (GKL), and Franklin, Deacon & Briars (FDB)
- Data entry into our online database of Bedford Gaol registers.
- Cleaning and repackaging.
- Numbering, checking and cataloguing the marriage licence bonds and allegations collection, (ABM).
- Identifying and cataloguing photographs to be added to our Z50 series.
- Creating a listing to assist with subject access requests to early adoption records

Thanks are due to all our volunteers and placements for their work during the year giving us approximately 3,200 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.

Accommodation remains our biggest challenge and this was recognised in the key findings and required actions of the Archive Service Accreditation panel.

‘Recent investment in the building has improved the storage conditions in the repository area, but storage capacity remains an issue for the archive service, particularly for ongoing collections development and satisfactory care of all collections held at Bedfordshire Archive Service.

Any redesign of the public facing and back office accommodation is limited by the nature of the building. Current accommodation is adequate in space but awkward in layout, which will pose challenges for the archive service in terms of ongoing development of on site services.

Required/improvement?	Requirement number(s) to which it relates	Details
1 Required action	1.4	Continue seeking solutions - short term, medium term and long term - to increase storage capacity in PD5454 compliant accommodation.’

There was no change to our accommodation during 2017/18.

Bedford Borough Council’s new Chief Officer for Economic Growth and Property visited the service and was made aware of the accommodation issues.

## 5. Collections

### New Accessions

85 new accessions were received this year. The two largest of these were family papers from the estate of the late Ian Graham-Orlebar (7 boxes) and Peacocks Estate Agents sale particulars. The later was originally 9 pallets of material but was weeded down to approximately 15 boxes.

Deposits included:

Parish deposits from: All Saints Bedford, Arlesey, Blunham Carlton, Kensworth, Leighton Buzzard, Roxton, Stevington, Turvey, Westoning, and Willington.

#### Bedfordshire

- The late Ian Graham-Orlebar (X464 additional)
- Bedfordshire County Council social services files (SS)
- Bedfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes (X939 add)
- Peacocks Estate Agents (PK add)

#### Bedford

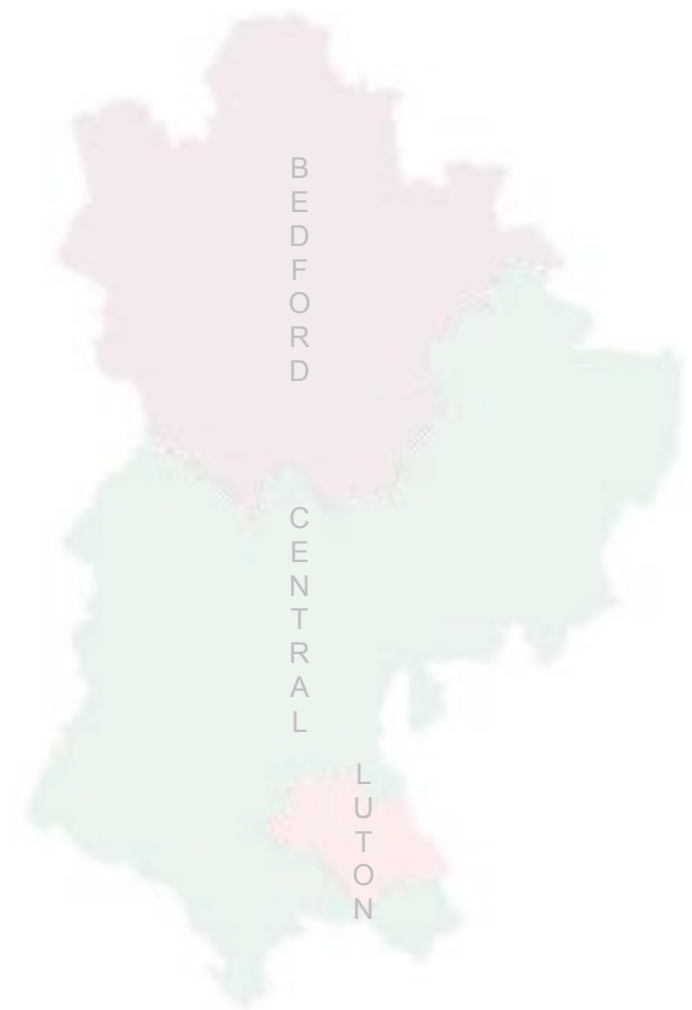
- Rotary Club of Kempston (X1012)
- Bedford Floral Arts Society (X1014)
- Dalton & Wade families of Upper Dean (Z1668, Z1669)

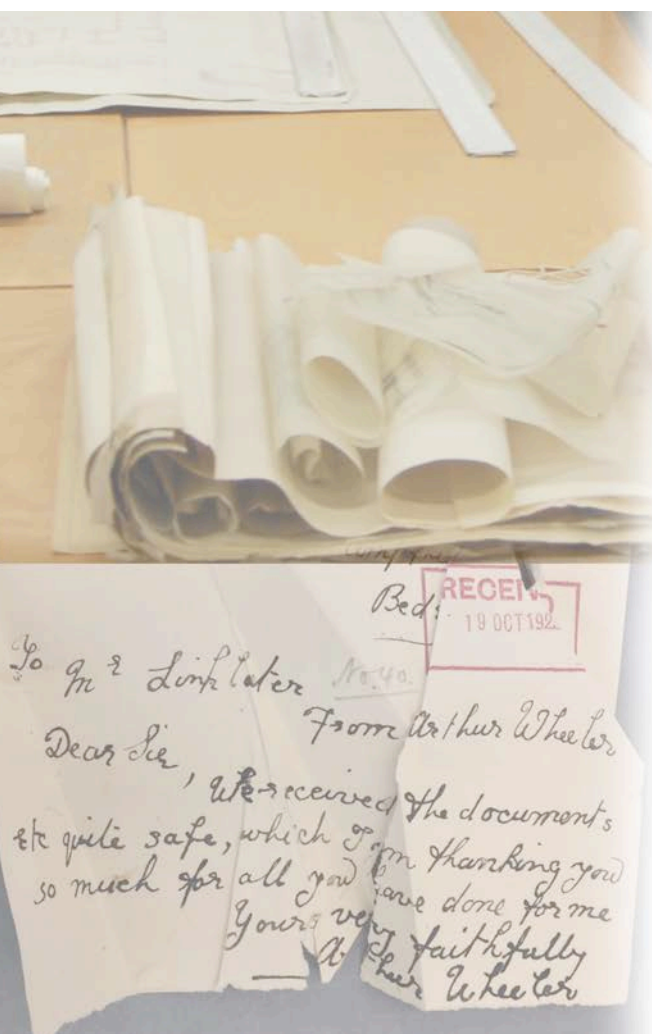
#### Central Bedfordshire

- Jane Cart's Charity (X699 add)
- Central Bedfordshire Rights of Way department (Lei/RW add)
- Harlington Sports Association (Z628 add)

#### Luton

- Luton Borough Council slum clearance 1939-1988 (BorL)





### Cataloguing

Regular staff and volunteers catalogued 6,620 documents in 107 different collections. In addition to this temporary staff were employed to work on two other cataloguing projects.

The first project was funded by the owner and depositor of the collection and has enabled the cataloguing of 2,422 architectural drawings from Sir Albert Richardson's Ampthill office (RGH6). The second project used funding from the Bedfordshire Family History Society to begin creating a brief online catalogue of our wills collection (ABP/W). By the end of the year 5,142 wills had been catalogued. Both projects have already proved extremely useful and we are grateful for the support, which made them possible.

We continue to catalogue and index material to international standard; catalogues appear immediately on our online public access catalogue <http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk>

### Conservation

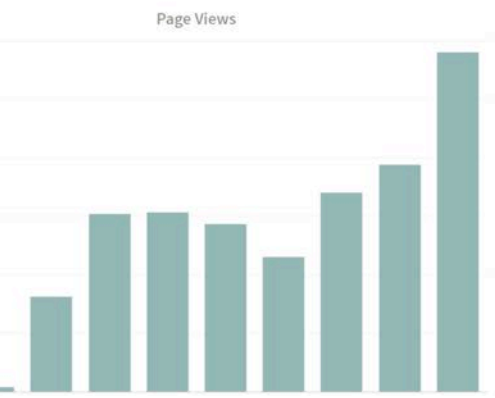
930 items were dealt with during the year. During the first half of the year our conservator was busy preparing for her Archives & Records Association Conservation Training Scheme final assessment. Unfortunately for us, following her successful assessment, Vicki received an offer of employment elsewhere and left our service. We have so far been unable to recruit another conservator to the post and while it is vacant we have been particularly thankful for the assistance of our two conservation volunteers who have managed to keep on top of the day-to-day need for custom made folders and boxes and helped with the mounting of our exhibitions.

The reader support officer on document production continued the repackaging programme as part of their background tasks. This has led to the review of some uncatalogued collections, which has either resulted in them being: catalogued, prioritised for cataloguing, weeded or deaccessioned.



### Digitisation

In April the registers of electors 1832-1986, the first of our collections to be licensed to Ancestry, went online. This was followed in August by the land tax, valuation and petty session records. The last of the licensed collections, poor law records, are being indexed by volunteers via Ancestry's World Archive Project <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/community/awap> This project is currently 32% complete; the records will go online once indexing has been completed. Ancestry can be accessed for free at our office and in the libraries of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

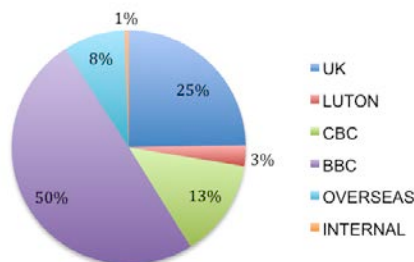


Month	Page Views
April-2017	1,872
May-2017	1,704
June-2017	1,514
July-2017	1,388
August-2017	12,414
September-2017	90,004
October-2017	81,238
November-2017	57,044
December-2017	46,004
January-2018	87,004
February-2018	77,004
March-2018	115,004
Total:	325,170

## 6. Public Access

Visitor numbers were slightly higher than the previous year – 1,507, against 1,485 visitors in 2016/17. The number of documents retrieved from the stacks was 12,579.

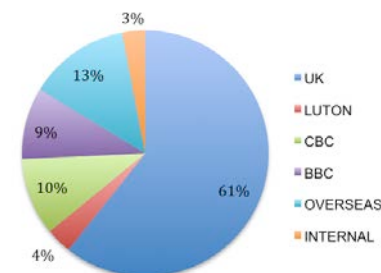
Where visitors came from



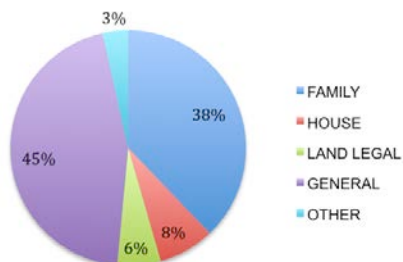
The system for visitor bookings has settled down. Booking enables us to manage our resources better, provide a personal and well prepared service for the visitor and keep visitors informed of any issues that may affect their visit or research. We hope to introduce online booking in the future as part of Bedford Borough Council's digital operating model.

Staff answered 1,151 enquiries that required detailed advice or research. 96% were answered within two working days of receipt. Our target is 95% within 2 working days. We introduced an online enquiry form early in 2107/18.

Remote enquires came from



Subject of research



We seek and listen to people's views and monitor and respond to feedback. This year we received 5 pieces of negative feedback. 2 related to problems that had arisen from old and inaccurate catalogue entries. The entries were amended and the customers were happy with the result. 2 related to service publicity. Luton Borough Council objected to the heading 'Bedford Archives' used by the editor of *Bedfordshire Midweek*. We were able to tell Luton that we had already put in a complaint to the editor. One of our volunteers felt that her work had been misrepresented in one of our newsletter articles. Steps were taken to amend the wording on the online edition. One customer objected to our reproduction fees.

We received many positive comments including one on behalf of a family where 'the thorough report has helped us to clear up an age old mystery and we can now pay our respects to our sadly departed grandparents and add to the family tree the documentation provided.'

In the autumn we took part in a national survey of remote users. The results were published in early 2018. At 85% our overall rating of 'very good' was higher than the national average of 77%. We scored above average for quality of content, clarity and promptness but were in line with the national average with regard to satisfaction with charges. A greater proportion heard about our service from our website than the national average (78% compared with 58%) and we did better than average on website navigation. The proportion of enquirers for whom this was the first time they had contacted us was particularly high 84% against the average of 68%. These results indicate that our remote enquiry service draws new people to the service and is valued by users, particularly those who are unable to visit us in person.



## Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service



The Bedfordshire Record Office, as it was formerly known, was established in 1913 by Dr George Herbert Fowler (left) and was the first County record office in England. We hold the archives for the County dating from 1166 to the

### 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 the building later used as the infants' school which is now the church hall on the

system - the perfect present

Hall, Bedford.

[er.com/#/BedsArchives](#) for pages and events.

## On-line presence

The number of page views of our website totalled 183,028. Our online catalogue had 321,050 views. Our resources on *Ancestry* had 532,869 views and the gaol database, which can be accessed via *Ancestry*, received 35,594 views.

## We have:

- Our website, of general information, guides to sources, on-line newsletters, exhibitions and our community archives pages.
- Our programme of adding detailed local material to the website this year added information for: Brickhill, Brogborough, Cainhoe, Clapham, Clophill, Everton, Flitwick, Goldington, Ion, Leighton Buzzard, Lower Gravenhurst, Upper Gravenhurst and Roxton. Further pages were added for Luton. Volunteers have compiled information on: Little Staughton, Carlton and Tebworth. We hope to recruit more volunteers in the coming year to help us continue adding to the information available on places throughout the county.
- Our online public access catalogue. At the end of the year 94.2% of our catalogues were available online.
- Twitter @BedsArchives. This is used to highlight events and developments and has enabled informal first contact, which we have then been able to build on more formally.
- YouTube Channel BedfordshireArchives. We launched this channel to enable people to interact with our centenary exhibitions and have added videos to help people understand our work and some relevant for people thinking of visiting the service.
- Facebook page. This is another way of highlighting events and developments within the service. It has been good to receive positive feedback on the service via our social media.
- Input to our database of 19<sup>th</sup> century gaol registers has continued however, due to technical difficulties the website has not updated automatically. It is hoped that all this year's entries will be uploaded in April 2018.
- World War One commemorative blogs and Twitter feed telling stories of life on the home and service fronts.

chives and records service  
 hives Service Newsletter No.92  
 mmer 2012  
 ifordshire and Luton Archives  
 Records Service  
 ifordshire Pubs

on  
 ook Lane Flitton  
 id 39 High Street Flitton  
 ok Lane Flitton  
 gh Street Flitton  
 ok Lane Flitton  
 Education in Flitton  
 n Before 1086  
 n Church Alterations and  
 ns  
 n Church Architecture  
 n 1086  
 n Index of Pages  
 n Manor

Bedfordshire Archives Service Catalogue

INTRODUCTION	SEARCH	RESULTS	DETAILS	SELECTION	SEARCH HISTORY
Advanced search					
Search in		Archives			
Advanced search		1 Person/institution			
Expert search		1 Subject term 1 Archive creator 1 Word(s) from the title / content			



Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service

Bedfordshire Gaol Register

1 gaol registers held by the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS). Level of detail varies ves some of the following details of the criminal: name, age, hair colour, height, crime, dates of commital and trial, g. release, death, transportation etc. The database presently covers the period between 1801 and 1879 (with gaps) Our aim is to add the details from all the surviving County Gaol and House of Correction registers held at BLARS for nate total of 35,000+ entries.

ou must complete at least one field. Gaol records will be matched against the exact spelling of the criteria entered. If [PLUS](#).

n:	<input type="text"/>	Year To:	<input type="text"/>
ie:	<input type="text"/>	Last Name:	<input type="text"/>
iest):	<input type="text"/>	Age (latest):	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	Trade or Occupation:	<input type="text"/>
n:	<input type="text"/>	Birth Country:	<input type="text"/>
e Town:	<input type="text"/>	Residence County:	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	Sentence:	<input type="text"/>
y:	<input type="text"/>	How Disposed:	<input type="text"/>
iaol:	<input type="text"/>	Document Ref:	<input type="text"/>

Search Reset

### A Sandy Soldier at Ypres



Sandy Market Place [Z1306/99]

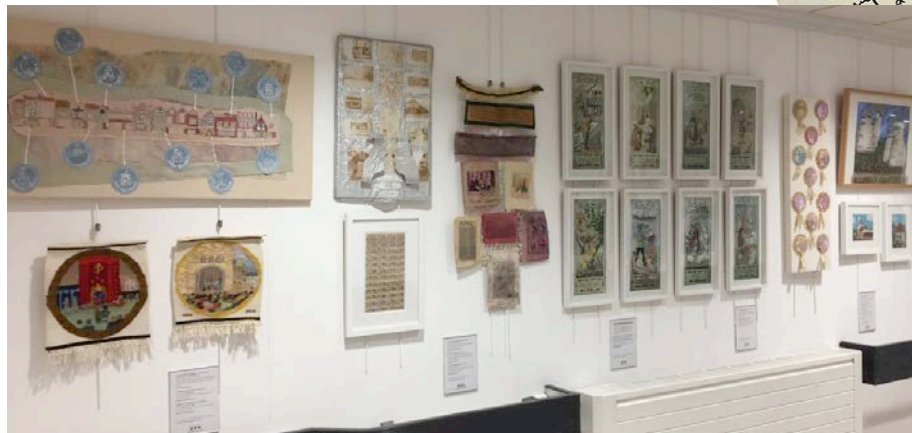
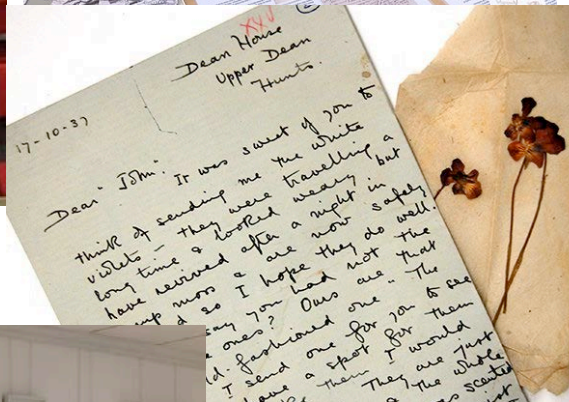
Tuesday 30th March 1915: 7163 Private Oscar Emery of B Company, 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment is currently with his unit in the front line near Ypres. He tells us: "We are now doing 60 hours in the trenches instead of 48. The trenches are fairly good. There are some old houses but behind the line the houses have been destroyed by German shells and are

In the Name of God Amen I Edward Bear of the  
Parish of Shillington in the County of Bedford Carpenter  
do hereby certify that the within is a true and correct  
copy of the original as the same appears by the  
records of the Court of the said County of Bedford  
and of so much thereof as is hereunto  
certified by me the said Edward Bear  
this 11th day of June 1811



## Highlights of 2017/18

- Starting to produce an online catalogue of our wills thanks to Bedfordshire Family History Society.
- University of Bedfordshire students from Luton presenting their designs for a new archive building.
- The Mayor of Bedford testing out our game at Bedford High Street Showcase.
- Explaining conservation to Heritage Open Day visitors.
- Receiving new collections including a wonderful collection relating to Charlotte Mackay Brown (ne Dalton) of Upper Dean complete with violets.
- *Weaving Narratives* on display at Bedford Hospital.
- Cataloguing Richardson & Houfe drawings (RGH6) with funding from the depositor.





## Outreach

Staff gave 10 talks to external groups with a total attendance of 540. In the spring of 2018 we ran a series of three talks at Ampthill library and family and local history sources workshops at Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard libraries in Central Bedfordshire. The talks were a combination of talks previously given at other venues and new talks.

2 groups visited the office for training sessions either to help group members use the archive service for research projects or prepare their group's archives for transfer to Bedfordshire Archives Service.

We mounted three exhibitions on our 2017 theme *Thinking of You*. In April – June we looked at *Thinking of You: Remembering Then*, this was followed by *Thinking of You in Time of Need*, and finally *Thinking of You All Equally*, which considered how attitudes have changed over time. Our theme for 2018 is #Vote100 including a look at electoral reform and a celebration of women. The first exhibition from January to March looked at changes to the franchise in the centuries before 1918.

Items from our collections were lent to The Higgins, Bedford for their exhibitions of Bedford Choral Society, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Shorts works at Cardington and Celebrating Women of Bedfordshire. We also supplied exhibition panels on Refugees in Bedfordshire.

In September we participated in Heritage Open Days running tours of the archives service and exhibiting alongside the Higgins in the council suite at Borough Hall. Woburn Abbey used some documents from the Russell collection usually held by us in their summer exhibition on the redecoration of the state rooms. The curators uncovered new information while researching the documents in our holdings enabling them to correct misconceptions about when the rooms had been furnished.



As part of the Heritage Bedford group we took part in the *Bedford High Street Showcase* day in June, *Love Bedford Day* in early July, and the Harpur Trust's *Have a Go Day* in September.

We worked with *Carers in Beds* on a scrapbook project for people suffering from dementia. There were further displays of work from the *Weaving Narratives* and *Carers in Beds* projects of 2016/17 at Bedford Hospital and Bedford Central Library.

Visits were made to 10 schools in some cases to run sessions with multiple classes and year groups. More than 25 education resource packs were supplied to 10 different schools.

We have had a regular spot in the new Bedfordshire wide free newspaper *Bedfordshire Midweek* and this has produced some interesting and useful feedback particularly in the identification of pictures from the collection of *Bedfordshire on Sunday* (the forerunner of *Bedfordshire Midweek*).

## 7. Records Management & Deeds Registry

The Records Management team work for the internal departments of the three funding authorities. They receive consignments of paper records no longer needed on a regular basis by the creating department then manage the storage, retrieval, and when appropriate the transfer or destruction of these internal records.

This year the team have made progress in securely destroying files that have reached the end of their retention period. Not keeping files longer than necessary is important good records management practice but is carefully controlled and is carried out in liaison with the creator department. 2,304 boxes were securely destroyed during year. Some records are transferred to the archives at the end of their retention period.

The number of boxes received totalled 1,649: Bedford Borough Council: 750; Central Beds Council: 380; Luton Borough Council: 448; shared: 71.

The number of files requested back by departments totalled 979; 618 relating to Bedford Borough Council holdings, 245 Central Beds Council, 102 Luton Borough Council, 14 Shared services.

The team has also worked hard in clearing storage areas of Borough Hall to ensure that all semi-current records are included in the records management system.

The service runs a deeds registry of title deeds, agreements, leases etc. for Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. During 2017/18 707 items were accessioned for Bedford and 1,196 for Central. 1,555 deed packets and files were requested back by departments during the year (65% related to Bedford Borough).

## 8. For more information

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

[archive@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk)

[www.bedford.gov.uk/archive](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/archive)

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

