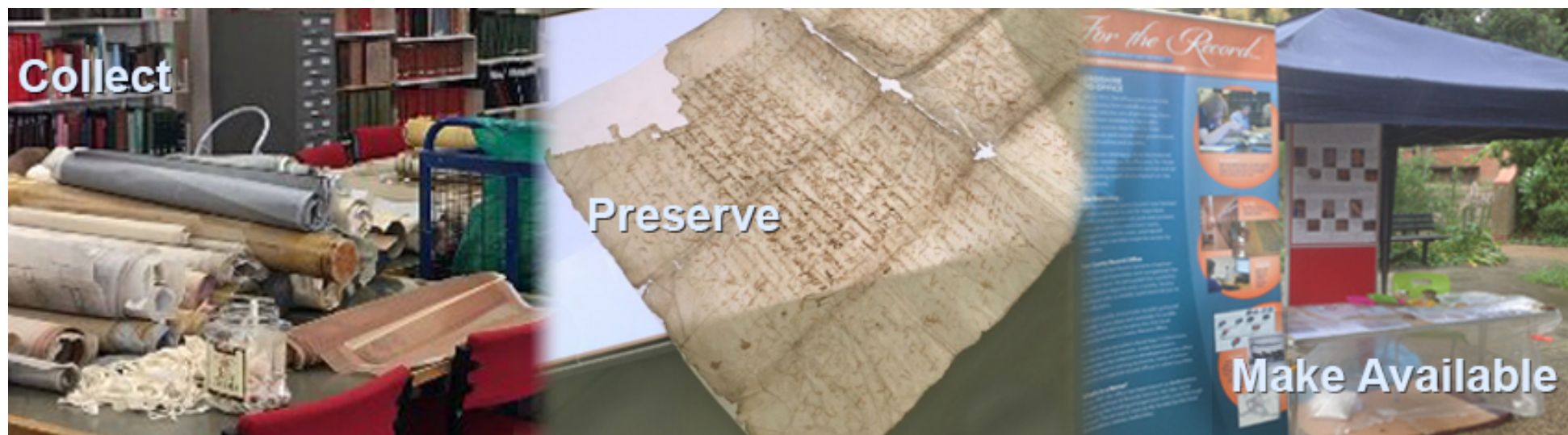


# *Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service*



## *Annual Report 2019/2020*





## *Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service Annual Report, 2019/20*

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### **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.

The service is accredited under the national archive accreditation scheme. Our accreditation was confirmed in July 2019 after the completion of our 3-year review.

## 2. Finance

As a shared service our funding is drawn from all three unitary authorities of Bedfordshire based on population. Use of reserve capital funds for map storage are not included in 2016/17 or 2018/19. Grants in 2018/19 and 2019/20 were new burdens funding for public records under the 20 year rule.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	Outturn	Outturn	Outturn	Outturn	Initial forecast
<b>Account (T)</b>					
Employees*	£346,546	£342,784	£312,406	£319,362	£323,650
Supplies and Services	£13,560	£15,489	£21,540	£21,890	£19,850
Records Management	£84,928	£84,964	£81,550	£79,095	£80,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£445,034</b>	<b>£443,697</b>	<b>£415,496</b>	<b>£420,347</b>	<b>£423,500</b>
Customer and Client Receipts	£29,997	£20,659	£19,370	£16,910	£21,000
Donations for cataloguing projects		£15,000			
Grants			£820	£863	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£29,997</b>	<b>£35,659</b>	<b>£20,190</b>	<b>£17,773</b>	<b>£21,000</b>
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>£415,037</b>	<b>£408,038</b>	<b>£395,306</b>	<b>£402,574</b>	<b>£402,500</b>
<u>Contributions</u>					
Luton Borough Council	£38,835	41,716	£40,247	£38,278	
Luton Cultural Services Trust	£98,546	105,447	£102,061	£97,330	
Central Bedfordshire Council	£166,732	134,117	£131,013	£133,478	
Bedford Borough Council	£110,923	126,758	£121,985	£133,488	
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>£415,037</b>	<b>£408,038</b>	<b>£395,306</b>	<b>£402,574</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	

\*does not include expenditure on Bedford Borough Council FOI/EIR staff.

### 3. Staff

This year was one of stability. No staff left the service. As the result of a transfer of line management between departments in Bedford Borough Council, Andrea Bechtle, Freedom of Information Officer for Environment and Enabling joined the Records side of the service in the early part of the year. This stability was a welcome relief as we adjusted and settled into the staffing structure that came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018.

### Work Experience and Volunteers

Although there was little change on the staffing front 2019/20 saw a number of changes to our volunteers. We sadly said goodbye to Cheryl and James, who had both been with us since 2017 but happily we welcomed five new recruits. Each new volunteer brings a fresh enthusiasm and their own life experiences and introducing them to the work and world of archives and records keeps us on our toes; challenging why we do what we do and reaffirming why archives and records is such a great thing to be involved with.

Five people (two undergraduates and three post-graduates) gained work experience with us exploring archives as a career choice.

Over the year 27 volunteers worked on a variety of projects for us, including:

- Completing catalogues for: the Chrystal and Swain postcard collections (Z1306, Z1130), architectural plans for George Kent Ltd of Luton, Bedford Borough Council's Municipal Charities archives (BorBH),
- Cataloguing of: Bedford Rural District plans (RDBP), Franklin, Deacon & Briars drawings (FDB), the Argenti family of Picts Hill, Turvey collection (X928), and the Luton Rambling Club (Z1165)
- Creating a basic online catalogue for our wills collection, (ABP/W)
- Cleaning and repackaging the Archbishops Transcripts (ABT)
- Cleaning and repackaging the RR collection and oversized public rights of way material from the Quarter Sessions Rolls (QSR)
- Making portfolios for our plan chests to make production of architectural drawings easier and safer
- Identifying and cataloguing photographs to be added to our Z50 series
- Data entry into our online database of Bedford Gaol registers
- Translating manor court rolls for Leighton Buzzard
- Providing content for our community archive webpages on Carlton, Chellington, Cranfield, Little Staughton.

Thanks are due to all our volunteers and placements for their work during the year giving us approximately 3,000 hours of their free time.

Cataloguing by volunteers revealed several items that were perfect for our Jan-Mar 2020 exhibition. Several items from the Bedford Borough Municipal Charities and these two from the Argenti collection, X928





## 4. Accommodation

In May 2019 we celebrated being in our present accommodation for 50 years. Although our building has served us well in that time 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.

### Required/improvement?

1 Required action

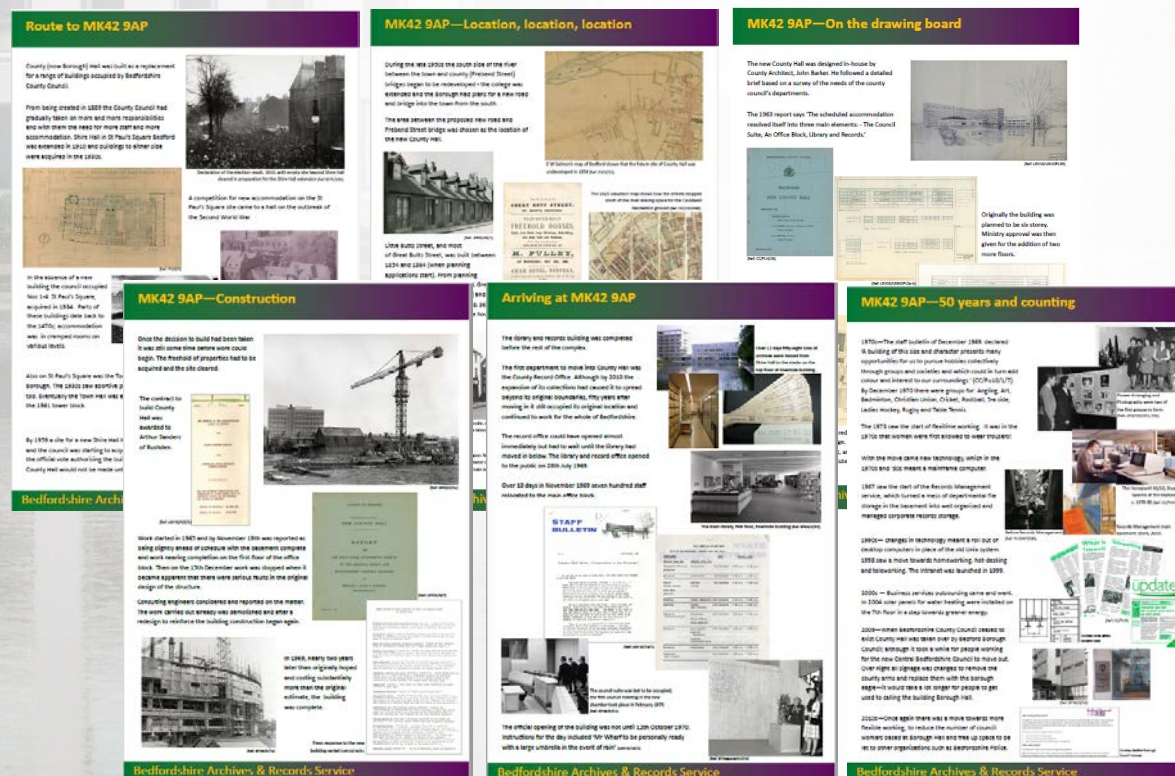
### Requirement number(s)

1.4

### Details

Continue seeking solutions - short term, medium term and long term - to increase storage capacity in PD5454 compliant accommodation.’

This year we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our building with an exhibition. Originally created at the request of the Borough Hall Christian Fellowship to mark their own anniversary, this exhibition then transferred to the waiting area of the main building where it could be seen by visitors to the building as well as by staff.



## 5. Collections

### New Accessions

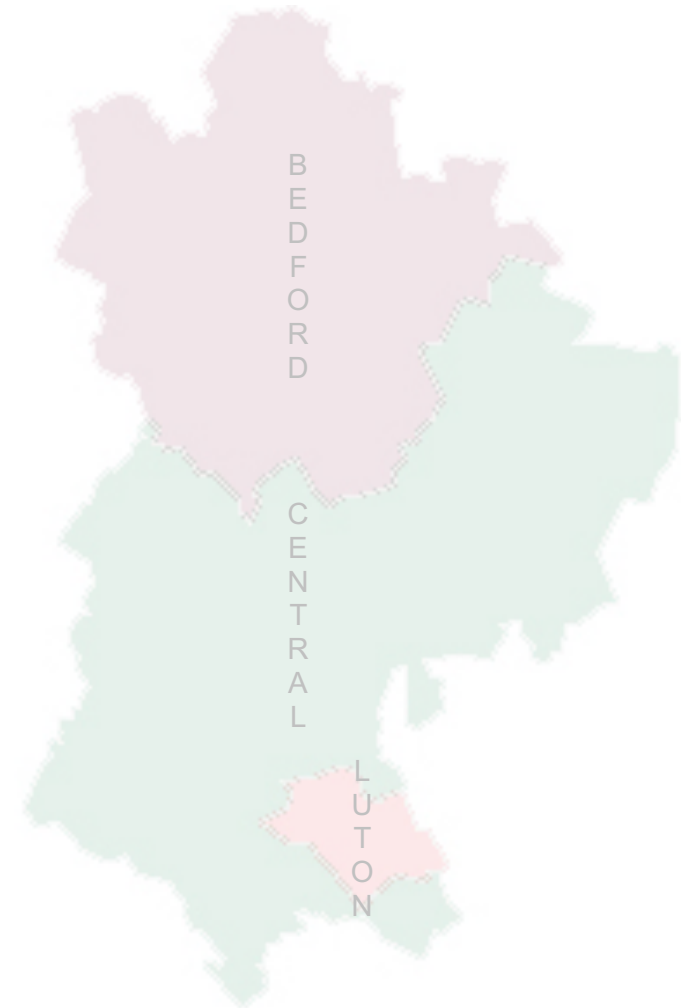
90 new accessions were received this year.

The largest deposit was the transfer of magistrates' court registers under the Public Records Act 1958. The registers were from the courts at: Luton, Bedford Borough, North Bedfordshire, Ampthill, Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard and date from between 1950 and 1999. These records have a volume of over 46.5 cubic metres. As we have no space to store these records on site they have been sent to offsite storage.

Other deposits included:

- Parish records from: Cranfield, Leighton Buzzard, Whipsnade, Yelden.
- Parish Council deposits from: Caddington, Clophill, Colmworth, Eascotts, Harrold, Kempston Rural, Kensworth, Langford, Melchbourne & Yeldon, Milton Ernest, Sharnbrook, Stanbridge, Staploe & Duloe, Stondon, Turvey and Woburn.
- Bedfordshire County Council planning department slides
- Bedfordshire County Council property department architectural drawings
- Bedfordshire Women's Institutes
- Aragon lacemakers (X1023)
- Anglo-Italian Music Society (Z1729)
- Redbornstoke Morris and Bedfordshire Lace Morris Group (Z1713)
- Dallow Road Primary School, Luton (SDLutonDP)

We welcome new material that meets our collecting policy and we are particularly keen to receive material that reflects all the communities and diversity of the county and fills gaps in our collections. At the beginning of March we revised and published on our website new guidance for anyone who is considering offering material to the archives service.







### Cataloguing

Regular staff and volunteers catalogued 21,876 documents in 116 different collections. Major work completed this year included: the James Rhind photographs of Luton (Z1691), letters from the Lucas collection (L30), Aragon Lacemakers (X1023).

Volunteers have continued the work on our main collection of wills. Entries for 3,255 wills were added to the catalogue during the year. Volunteers completed the cataloguing of our two postcard collections, Z1130 and Z1306. This project has taken over 10 years to sort, research, catalogue and, where possible, digitise 11,874 cards. We are extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have worked on this project over the years. The cards are heavily used for topographical and social history.

Catalogues are published on our online public access catalogue <http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk>



### Conservation

In addition to work on incoming collections and material identified by collection surveys or staff, our conservator carried out repairs to wills and to the autobiography of Miss Joyce Godber. The wills collection has always been heavily used but is now receiving increased requests for copies as entries are added to the online catalogue. Miss Godber's autobiography became available to researchers in January when the embargo on access expired but needed some conservation to enable safe handling. This work was explained in our March 2020 newsletter.

Our three conservation volunteers continued to repack collections. The cleaning, flattening and packaging of our Archbishops Transcripts collection made very good progress, work on RR was completed and the repackaging of Quarter Sessions rights of way material begun. Approximately 300 portfolios were made to improve the storage and access of the Franklin, Deacon, Briars architectural drawings.



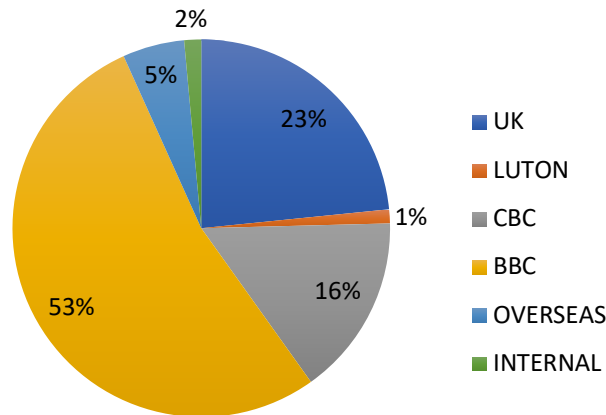
### Digitisation

We have the following collections licenced to 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers of digital content: registers of electors 1832-1986, land tax valuation, petty session records (available via Ancestry) and school admission and log books, 1860s-1914 (available via FindMyPast). We continue to work with Ancestry for the publication of our poor law union records and hope to see this in 2020/21. Ancestry can be accessed for free at our office, as can other useful digital sites such as the British Newspaper Archive.

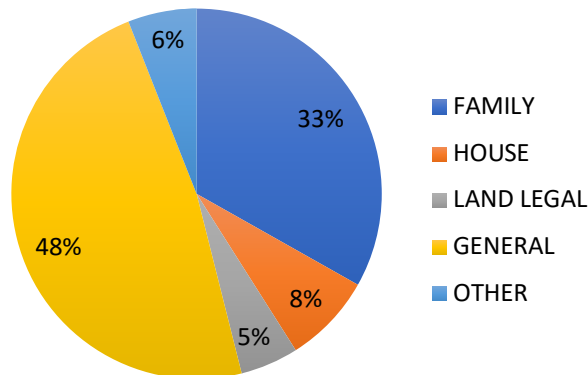
During this year our digitisation technician: provided our digital copying service to customers, worked with the volunteers to complete the digitisation of postcard collections, Z1130 and Z1306, and investigated transcription software for our wills collection.

## 6. Public Access

### Where visitors came from



### Subject of research



The number of visitors to the office was 1,171. The number of documents retrieved from the stacks was 8,378.

Visitor 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.

Staff answered 897 enquiries that required detailed advice or research. 98% were answered within two working days of receipt.

There was a 30% fall in family history enquiries (from 437 in 2018/19 to 308 in 2019/20), following our decision to stop undertaking in-depth genealogical research. We continue to undertake simple family history enquiries and general and local history research. We saw a 20% increase in building related remote enquires from 78 in 2018/19 to 96 in 2019/20.

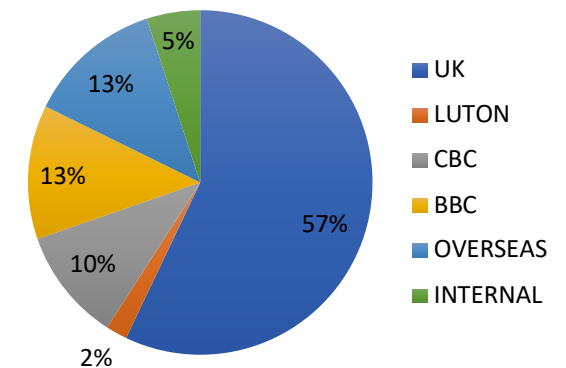
We seek and listen to people's views and monitor and respond to feedback.

It is always nice to receive positive feedback such as this comment from a searchroom user 'I've used this office many times in the past and always found it very efficient, professional & friendly. But today's visit exceeded that expectation.'

However, less positive feedback suggests that remote users find our online catalogue difficult to understand. We have a variety of plans to try to address this during 2020/21.

In the autumn we took part in a national survey of remote users. 83% of responses rated the service they received from us as very good.

### Remote enquires came from







Home

## Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service

Welcome.

We are the County Record Office for Bedfordshire. Anyone may use our service and the archives we hold for research either in person or remotely. We are based in Riverside Building, Borough Hall, Bedford.

Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service
Community Archives
Carlton Index of Pages
Carlton Church Architecture
Carlton Church Repairs and Alterations
Carlton Index of Pages
Carlton Manors
Carlton Rectory (Parsonage House)
Carpenters Arms Beerhouse Carlton
List of Carlton Rectors

Home > Community archives > Carlton > The Fox Public House Carlton

### The Fox Public House Carlton

This page was written by Pamela Hider



The Fox c.1925. The sign on the wall reads: Archibald C. Wallinger Licensed Retailer for Beer Spirituous Liquors to be drunk on the premises Licensed dealer in tobacco [WL800/Z]

The Fox Public House, 35 High Street Carlton

SEARCH	RESULTS	DETAILS	SELECTION	SEARCH HISTORY
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### Bedfordshire Archives Service Catalogue

Welcome to the on-line catalogue of Bedfordshire Archives Service. This enables you to search our archive catalogue or our searchroom library catalogue. We strongly advise you to read the help files available to ensure the best results. There are general help files to the left of each screen, or specific help by clicking a field.

Please note that this database does not yet include catalogues of all our holdings. Research should therefore [contact us](#) for further information.

[Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service](#)

### Bedfordshire Gaol Register

Entries from gaol registers held by the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS). Level of detail in each entry gives some of the following details of the criminal: name, age, hair colour, height, crime, dates of commitment, date of disposal e.g. release, death, transportation etc. The database presently covers the period between 1801 and 1879 on a weekly basis. Our aim is to add the details from all the surviving County Gaol and House of Correction registers held at Luton, an approximate total of 35,000+ entries.

Search criteria. You must complete at least one field. Gaol records will be matched against the exact spelling of the criteria please [contact us](#).

Year From:	<input type="text"/>	Year To:	<input type="text"/>
First Name:	<input type="text"/>	Last Name:	<input type="text"/>
Age (earliest):	<input type="text"/>	Age (latest):	<input type="text"/>
Gender:	<input type="text"/>	Trade or Occupation:	<input type="text"/>
Birth Town:	<input type="text"/>	Birth Country:	<input type="text"/>
Residence Town:	<input type="text"/>	Residence County:	<input type="text"/>
Offence:	<input type="text"/>	Sentence:	<input type="text"/>
Trial Type:	<input type="text"/>	How Disposed:	<input type="text"/>
Type of Gaol:	<input type="text"/>	Document Ref:	<input type="text"/>

## Online presence

The number of page views of our website totalled 423,779. Our online catalogue had 307,887 views. Our resources on *Ancestry* had 916,631 views and the gaol database received 32,465 views (31,295 via a link from Ancestry).

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 volunteers have compiled information on: Little Staughton, Carlton, Chellington, and Cranfield. We also added pages on the mayors of Bedford and the Bedfordshire roll of honour.
- Our online public access catalogue. At the end of the year 96% of our catalogues were available online.
- Our database of Bedford gaol registers. Input has continued and at the end of the year contained the transcripts of 54,598 entries from c1760-1905.
- World War One commemorative blogs and are still available as a resource.
- Twitter @BedsArchives. This is used to highlight events and developments and engage with national campaigns and archive promotion such as #exploreyourarchive.
- 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. We hope to utilise this more for recordings of webinars in 2021.
- 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.



BEDFORDSHIRE AT WAR: News from the Front Line

Image (c) artist Hugh Byrne, Shop33 and SNAP

Home Roll of Honour The Bedfordshire World War I The Bedfordshire Brief History Links About Us

Saturday, 10 November 2018

Business as Usual



Provided by:

Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service established 1912

A Joint Service Of

Introduction

This blog will cover the First World War day by day from 4th August 1914 to 11th November 1918. It will use local Bedfordshire newspapers and material held at Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service. It maintains the fiction that a reporter a hundred years ago had access to on the spot and up to the minute news as a reporter in a war zone today might do. Please note that censorship and much slower communications meant that articles such as you read here would either

Sunday 10th November 1918

## Outreach

This year much of our outreach consisted of collaboration between the archives service and other organisations.

In May, a suggestion from the member of the public behind our eulogies collection, led to us working with Bedford and Luton central libraries, the Bedfordshire Family History Society, and one of our depositors, Neville Funerals, to put on events as part of Dying Matters week. The Bedfordshire Family History Society is working on a project to index the Neville funeral registers held by the archives service for the benefit of its members.

Also in May we took part in the Harpur Trust's *Have a Go with Harpur* day. This was as a member of Heritage Bedford group. Membership of this group gives us opportunities for outreach and contacts that we would not otherwise have. This year these included:

Love Bedford's *Medieval Festival* in July.

On possibly the coldest, wettest, late July weekend ever we ran a stand using our display on medieval manors; our game of find the medieval royal charter and our seal making activity. We borrowed the gazebo, table and chairs from fellow Heritage Bedford member The Higgins and liaised with the Bedford Tour guides over the ice house key for their ice house and lime kiln tours.

St Paul's Church Christmas Tree Festival in December

This year's theme was the Twelve Days of Christmas. For the Heritage Bedford tree, each member was represented by one of the numbers and something they have – we were Five Ringing Records. Designing and making our decorations was a lovely collaboration between staff and volunteers.



Hatters' Heritage event in February.

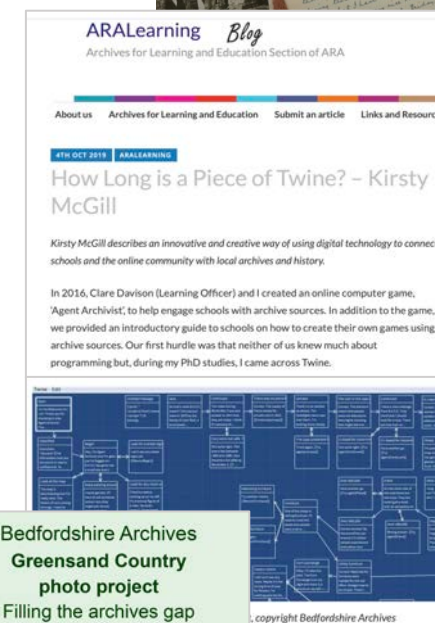
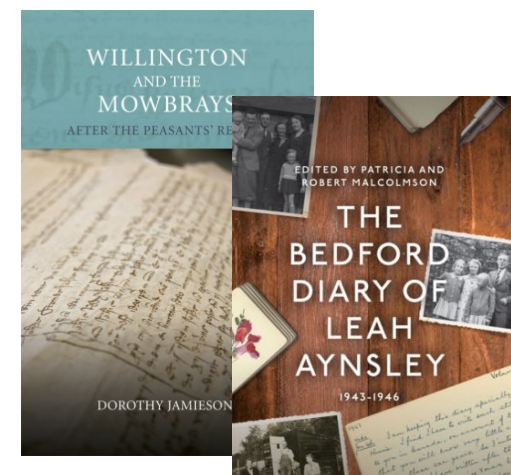
This began with the Hatters' Heritage team contacting the archive service to ask for support in finding a venue for an event in Bedford where people could share their memories of supporting Luton Town Football Club. Through Bedford Heritage we were able to introduce them to The Swan Hotel who provided a wonderful venue. At the event we provided information on how to care for documents. Our old photographs of Luton and Bedford football teams were a big hit too.





Other outreach included:

- A changeover of items from our collections on loan to The Higgins, Bedford for their exhibition about the Bedford Choral Society to prevent over exposure of individual items.
- Liaising with The Higgins over items for their forthcoming exhibition on weather.
- A volunteer from the John Bunyan museum using our service to research their 2019 summer exhibition *Gaol! Banged up in Bedford*.
- The Bedfordshire Historic Records Society published two volumes during the year. *Willington and the Mowbrays after the peasants' revolt* by Dorothy Jamieson is based on the study of manorial documents in the Russell collection held by the archives service. *The Bedford Diary of Leah Aynsley 1943-1946* publishes some of the diaries donated to the archives service in 2015, reference Z1606.
- Staff gave 4 talks to external groups with a total attendance of 88. In addition we gave a series of bi-monthly talks at Luton Central Library as part of a day of an archivist working there to answer questions. In the month before each event the library put on a display on the theme for which we utilised existing exhibition panels. We also supported the project run by Community Interest Luton *Vauxhall 60s to Now*, which involved 20 students from Denbigh High School.
- We ran a series of three workshops in how to use archives to research historic parks. This was for the Greensand Landscape Partnership and the workshops were produced with the help of the Bedfordshire Gardens Trust.
- Our digitisation technician wrote a piece for the blog of the Learning and Education section of the Archives & Records Association about the game for schools she had helped to create <https://aralearning.wordpress.com/2019/10/04/how-long-is-a-piece-of-twine-kirsty-mcgill/>. The piece explained how such a game could be created by archive services with minimum outlay or programming knowledge to teach programming skills, deductive reasoning and, of course, local history.
- In January we were awarded a grant by The Greensand Landscape Partnership for the *Fill the Gap* photo project, which seeks to collect modern photographs of Greensand Country for the archives.
- We launched a re-run of our *Weaving Narratives* textile project, to end in autumn 2020. The first workshop was held in March.
- Our 2019 lobby exhibitions were on the theme *War and Peace*, commemorating the period between 1919 and 1939. Our theme for 2020 is *Archives For All Seasons*; the first exhibition from January to March being *Winter*.



## 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. 2,364 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 1,130. These came from Bedford Borough Council: 524; Central Beds Council: 206; Luton Borough Council: 204; shared services: 196.

The number of files requested back by departments totalled 891; 535 relating to Bedford Borough Council holdings, 194 Central Beds Council, 131 Luton Borough Council, 2 Shared services and 29 Bedfordshire Police.

The service runs a deeds registry of title deeds, agreements, leases etc. for Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. During 2019/20 355 items were accessioned for Bedford and 1,448 for Central. Approximately 800 deed packets and files were requested back by departments during the year.

The team also manages the administration of Freedom of Information requests to Bedford Borough Council. 1,211 Freedom of Information and 540 Environmental Information Regulations request were received by the council during the year.

## 8. For more information

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<http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk>

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

