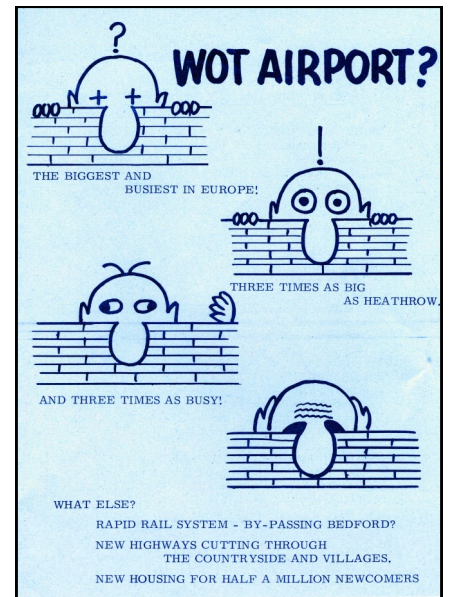


PROTEST AND PROPAGANDA, 1968-1987

Following on from the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, our latest lobby exhibition brings the theme of 'Freedom and Rights' right up-to-date. 'Power to the People' charts peaceful protest in Bedfordshire's living memory, focusing upon resistance to plans to build a third London airport at Thurleigh and widespread opposition to proposals to build a Nuclear Dump at Elstow. These plans prompted county-wide campaigns, supported by Bedfordshire County Council. The Bedfordshire Airport Resistance Association (BARA) and Bedfordshire Against Nuclear Dumps (BAND) generated striking propaganda and publicity material, the focus of the exhibition.

The BARA campaign of the late-1960s reveals as much about the developing social mores of the time as it does about the impact of having an airport close-by. Its profile was boosted significantly by so-called 'BARA Commandos', young women who wore mini-dresses for photo-calls outside 10 Downing Street. The Commandos attracted a lot of comment about the appropriateness of their dress. Their contribution to the campaign, for better or worse, certainly generated publicity! The exhibition features pictures of the Commandos, so come and see for yourself what the fuss was about. BARA also produced cartoons to attract people to the anti-airport lobby: meet the unsuspecting 'Mr Chad' (right, ref: Z118/F/11/4), who pops his head above the parapet only to be over-whelmed by the knock-on effects of an airport...Many of BARA's arguments centred on protecting a rural idyll, whereas the pro-airport lobby (TECDA) emphasised jobs and opportunity. Unfortunately, there are few records representing TECDA's campaign or views, other than what was presented at formal hearings.



The plan to develop a site for shallow dumping of radioactive waste at Elstow in the late-1980s was particularly controversial, as it not only had the potential to affect the local population's quality of life but even more importantly, their health. The anti-nuclear protest attracted the full support and backing of the County Council and the argument was eventually won on the grounds that the environmental and health risks of shallow dumping were unknown. The exhibition features posters, BAND newsletters and a photograph of the 'anti-NIREX' campaign van. NIREX was the UK representative of the nuclear industry and their publicity leaflets and articles are also featured in the exhibition. The County Council's archives tell us how the issue made the national media, attracting the likes of writer Jim Eldridge, who wrote a book 'Save Our Planet - An Anti-Nuclear Guide for Teenagers.' Some of the anti-NIREX posters were highly sophisticated and in some cases, very emotive. An important strand of the campaign focused upon the health and well-being of future generations and one of the posters we hold shows an aerial shot of Elstow schoolchildren lined-up to form a large 'NO'. Once it was made known that the Thatcher government had abandoned plans for shallow dumping anywhere in

the UK, BAND erected a memorial to its campaign in Kempston Hardwick (left), upon which is inscribed 'The Pilgrim's Protest'. The memorial is dedicated to 'the children of Bedfordshire.'

The items in the exhibition are derived from the County Council's secretariat and planning departments (refs: CS/LA and PL/NIX), as well as from a private collection deposited by BARA (ref: Z118). These records give us detailed insight into the operations, passion and reach of local lobby groups and the stages of decision-making when it comes to high-profile planning issues.

Rachel Bates

TREASURE IN OUR MIDST

In the heart of Bedford lies St Paul's Square, for centuries the centre of commercial, religious and civic life within the town. On the south side is a group of buildings known as Nos 1-4 St Paul's Square. Since 1969 these buildings have stood empty and lifeless, with the exception of a large pigeon population! Although No 1 was re-fronted in 1764 the origins of the buildings are much older and Nos 1-3 are listed. This posed a problem for any scheme that tried to bring the buildings back into use. Finally in 2014 Aldwyck Housing, with support and funding from many sources, took on the challenge and they have just completed the conversion into a house and nine apartments to let as affordable housing.



Bedford Borough Council, one of the supporters of the scheme, was keen to mark the end of the project. The project manager for the Bedford Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) approached the Archives Service with the idea of developing a treasure hunt based on the documents held by the service. Little did any of us suspect just how much information we hold. Work got underway to research and develop materials for use with schools, groups and as part of Heritage Open Days in September.

On the 30th of June, a beautiful summer day, searchroom staff and volunteers got to test out the Treasure Hunt and Spot the Difference competition as a staff training exercise. They were rewarded for their efforts with a trip to see the restored buildings before the new tenants move in. Pictures on [facebook.com/BedfordshireArchives](https://www.facebook.com/BedfordshireArchives). We learnt a lot and so did others as we shared our findings with the Borough Conservation Officer and the Historic Environment Record; two of the conservation officers (pictured far right) joined us for the hunt.



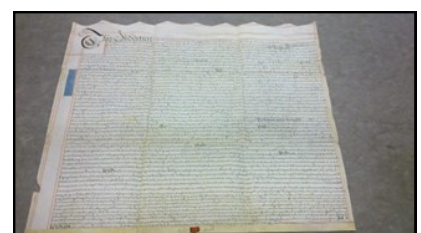
Join us on Thursday 10th September 2015 if you would like to learn more and hunt the treasure for yourself. Find out what treasures our documents contain and the stories of people who owned, lived and worked in the buildings themselves. More details on www.bedford.gov.uk/archiveevents

Pamela Birch

CONSERVATION CORNER

Conservation often requires the need to flatten documents, so that users can either read the document or have the document digitised. Small parchment documents can easily be scanned in for digitisation provided they are not too fragile. However larger parchment documents, which include indentures and estate maps, are simply too big to be scanned and need to be photographed. Large folded parchment documents do not photograph well as it is very difficult to get the document flat enough, and you can bet your bottom dollar that the bit you want to read is always along one of the folds! The safest way to flatten parchment is to set up a humidification chamber. The application of moisture is the best way to flatten a document. However, it is essential that no water comes into contact with the parchment as the ink will run. The method I use for humidifying parchment is a 'sympatex sandwich' which traps water vapour without allowing it come into contact with the document. Sympatex is an expensive material to use, but it is very gentle, and very effective.

To the right are the before, during and after pictures. In this instance the humidification chamber was timed to flatten this document just long enough to be flattened for digitisation, but short enough for the document to be folded back again.



Vicki Manners

ARCHIVISTS: THE NEXT GENERATION.

This week saw the last of four visits from a promising group of 'Young Archivists'. Year 12 history students from Wootton Upper took part in the programme to learn who we are, what we do and why. The idea of Archives Team Leader Martin Deacon and Education Outreach Officer Clare Rogers, 'Young Archivists' was a fantastic team effort as members of staff devised effective ways to engage interested young people in the work of our service.

Rachel Bates and I formulated an 'archiving activity', where groups of students could investigate new accessions and consider the challenges archivists face on a daily basis such as selecting documents with long term value and making records accessible. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the interesting discussions in this session.



Conservator Vicki Manners explained why and how we preserve and conserve documents. She also devised a practical in which we all (staff included!) had the opportunity to try and mend a torn plan. We all learnt that conservation requires a great deal of patience! Digitisation Technician Kirsty McGill explained her digitisation work to the group. This included overviews of the equipment, including the lighting rig she uses for capturing large scale documents like maps. This showed how we use new technologies to make our records more accessible.

Discussing our varied work with younger people made us consider it from a different perspective, and the staff learnt as much as the students during this enjoyable project. We hope to be able to bring our 'Young Archivists' programme to more groups, and urge anyone interested to get in touch!

Alexandra Healey

RECORDING THE OLD BILL

Last month saw the completion of a catalogue of records deposited at the archive by the Bedfordshire Police Museum. The collection comprises mainly of volumes and photographs and spans a wide date range (from 1836 - 1998). Represented in the records are the Bedfordshire Constabulary, as well as the now defunct Bedford, Dunstable and Luton Borough Forces, and the short lived Luton County Borough Police.

Of particular interest are the personnel records, and especially the Luton Borough Police Conduct and Service Book for 1900-1915 [Po/MUS8/3/2]. As well as detailed information on the officers, this particular volume includes portrait photographs alongside many entries. Featured here is the cheeky looking Police Constable John Horn. Many of these volumes were in poor condition and have been placed in our conservation department for assessment to determine the most effective way to prevent further damage and ensure their long term survival.

Given the period covered by the collection and the sensitivity of the information contained in some of the records (such as incident books and record of crime registers), many of the records are at present closed to public consultation. Nevertheless, for those interested in the history of the police in the county, there are still a range of materials which are open access. These include named photographs of police groups, Bedfordshire Constabulary bulletins and memos and committee minute books. The collection is far from complete, with large gaps in the records and many divisions represented by only a handful of items. However, this collection remains a rich and unique resource for anyone with an interest in the history of policing within Bedfordshire.



Alexandra Healey

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

SCHOOL RECORDS NOW ONLINE!

The Archives Service, as part of a National Consortium project, has entered into an agreement with Find My Past, the genealogy website, to digitise our school logbooks and admission registers that date from 1870 to 1914. These records can now be accessed under the 'National School Records' dataset by Find My Past subscribers or for free via the public computers at the Archives Service and searched by name and place. School records have a 100 year embargo so any content we hold for 1915 to date is not publicly available. There is no statutory requirement for schools to pass records to the Archives Service, so we don't hold information on every school in Bedfordshire's history, but along with the social history of the time, you're likely to find information on naughty children, outbreaks of nits and details of teacher's appointments.

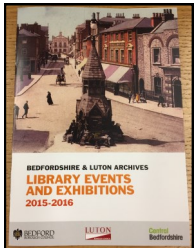


A LIFE SENTENCE?

Having completed their work on Bedfordshire's Quarter Session Rolls our Paths to Crime volunteers wondered if there was anything else we would like them to do. Naturally we said 'yes please'.

The marriage allegations and licenses in the Archdeaconry of Bedford collection (ABM) have never been catalogued. Four volumes in the Bedfordshire Parish Registers Series index them but they are hard to use. This means they are an underused source for family and social historians, although they contain details of age, residence and friends of the groom and bride wishing, although not always succeeding, to enter into matrimony. It was suggested that the team could use the skills they had acquired to clean, number and catalogue the boxes of documents so that they are more accessible and *Paths to Crime* transformed into *The Marriage Bureau*. Good progress is already being made although it would be much quicker if the grooms were more consistent about the way they spell their name—the record so far is 3 different spellings on one document.

BLARS Library Events



Don't forget to check our website for information on our upcoming talks at libraries around the county www.bedford.gov.uk/archiveevents or pick up one of our leaflets with all the details of the talks and the exhibitions we'll be holding here at the Archives throughout 2015 and 2016.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE: BEDFORDSHIRE SPEAKS OUT

Our new exhibition, *Power to the People: Bedfordshire Speaks Out* runs from July to October and is the second instalment in our Freedom and Rights series. To complement the exhibition, archivist Rachel Bates will be giving a lunchtime talk at the Archives Service, entitled '**Bedfordshire Riots**' on Thursday 20th August 2015 at 1pm. This talk will explore examples of violent protest, sourced from the Archives. Entry is free but please let us know if you are planning to come by emailing archive@bedford.gov.uk.

We welcome ideas and material for future issues.

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Jointly funded by Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council & Luton Borough Council