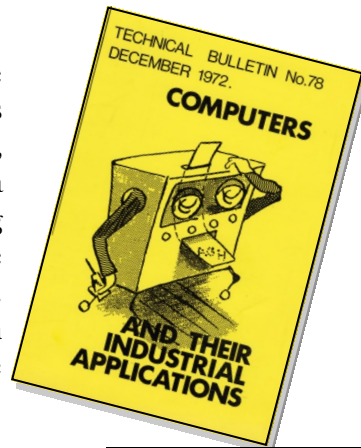


THINKING OF YOU - REMEMBERING THEN

From 12th April until June our exhibition in the Archives Reception area is the second in our *Thinking of You* series, which looks at the personal nature of archives in our collection. *Remembering Then* looks at the role of reminiscence and memory, to coincide with Dementia Awareness Week (14-20 May 2017). It showcases a selection of photographs and other archives that say something about changing fashions and times in twentieth century Bedfordshire. These are grouped into the following themes: 'Home', 'Leisure & Entertainment', 'Technology' and 'Transport'. My favourite is the 'Technology' section, which includes a leaflet issued by Luton Libraries in 1972 listing its books on computers and their applications, well before we had home computers.



Ref: BTNeg6222/13

There are also some interesting photographs of people at work using older forms of technology, such as an 'adding machine' and reel to reel tape recorder. Do you know what test this nurse is carrying out in 1959?

Ref: Lei/Li/Lib/L2/5/6

In the display cabinets are records that have been created to capture people's personal stories and their recollections of a local area. There are: oral history transcripts from the 'Sands of Time' and Marston Vale Oral History projects, an extract from the memoirs of Cranfield lass Daisy Denton describing her first sighting of a 'flying machine', the Eggington Women's Institute scrapbook from 1965 and the diaries of Leah Aynsley (b.1902, d.1989). Leah's diaries, dating from 1930 to 1989, are a relatively recent acquisition to the Archives and are an important insight into the life of an ordinary woman living in Bedford throughout World War Two and beyond. Leah was born in Sunderland, but from 1930 resided at 66 Marlborough Road, Bedford. She lived there until the 1980s when she moved to Parkside Residential Home in Kempston. Leah was conscious of her legacy and upon her death it was her express wish that the diaries should be donated to the Archive Service for posterity. She records this in the diaries and reflects on her motivations for keeping a diary. On the 3 May 1954, she wrote:

'I think I know why I keep a diary; being single I want something of mine to live after me; I intend bequeathing it to Bedford Records Office & being written by a working class person...it may be interesting in future centuries; alas I find great pleasure in reading it occasionally. During the great freeze-up in 1947, when one hugged the fire-side, I read right from the beginning (1929). Of course my memory filled in lots of deficiencies but it was interesting reading to me then. Lastly, it is often useful to settle arguments as to what happened on such & such occasions.'

I think we can all relate to the last reason!

Rachel Bates, Archivist

'My Bedfordshire' Scrapbook Project

During April and May, the Archives joined forces with *Carers in Bedfordshire* on a reminiscence project. *My Bedfordshire* seeks to engage carers and loved ones who have dementia with archives, culminating in personal scrapbooks. *Carers in Bedfordshire* are co-ordinating this project in three locations: Bedford, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard. Following introductory meetings, there will be opportunities for carers and their loved ones to work with local artists to compile their scrapbooks, using material from the archives and their own collections.



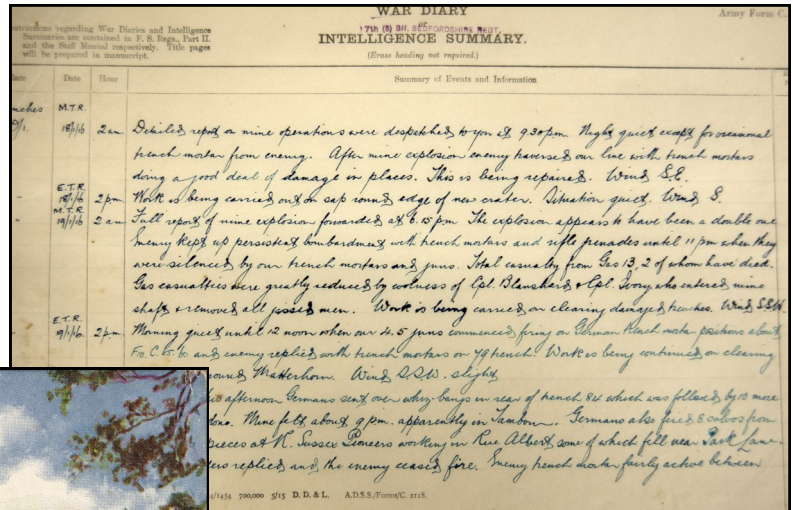
REWRITE HISTORY CHALLENGE - COMPETITION WINNERS!

Congratulations to Tegan Ingram and Sammy Langley who are the winners of the Rewrite History competition. We asked Year 5 – Year 13 students in Bedfordshire to write a short story or a poem that had been inspired from one of the archives. It was up to the students to decide what had happened or what might happen.

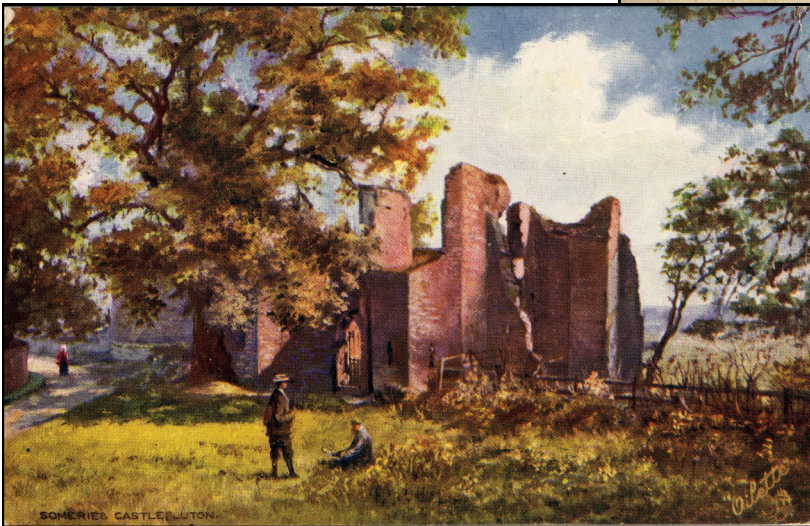
The competition was launched in October last year and we really had no idea if any students would take up the challenge. When the contest closed in February we were delighted to have received over two hundred entries from eleven different schools across the county.

Judging was not an easy process with so many well written entries from which to create a short list of eight. Kate Milner who acted as our guest judge then had the unenviable task of selecting the two winners. After much contemplation, we decided on our winners, finalists and twelve highly commended entries that were to be compiled in an anthology.

‘Muddy Boots’ was written by Tegan Ingram, a student at Queensbury Academy and was chosen as the Key stage 2 -3 winning entry. Tegan used a Bedfordshire Regiment First World War diary as inspiration for her story set in the trenches. Kate felt that the story was; ‘a very impressive piece of writing for someone of any age’ and that ‘not everything is spelled out, leaving room for the imagination, which shows a very sophisticated understanding of how narratives work.’



Ref: X550/8/1 7th Btn Bedfordshire Regiment war diary, 19 January 1916,



Ref: Z1306/75/14/2 Someries Castle, Luton

‘The Ruins of London’ was the Key stage 4 – 5 winning entry by Sammy Langley, a student at Sharnbrook Upper School. Samantha used an early postcard image for her story whose wartime narrator finds refuge and hope in the ruins of Someries Castle. Kate commented that she loved ‘the optimism of the end and the thoughtful intelligence of the writing.’ She went on to add that it was ‘a very sensitive and mature piece of writing.’

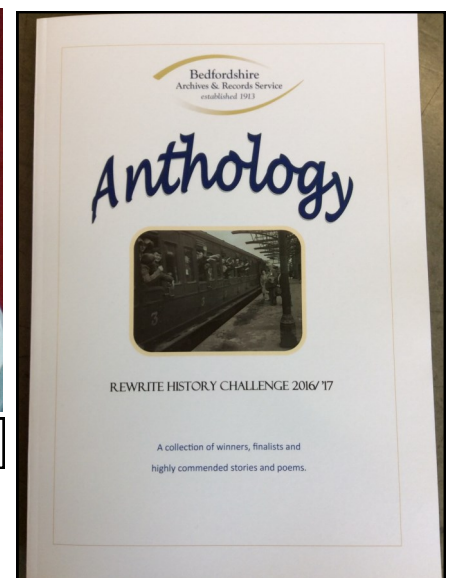
We agreed that Kate had chosen two very worthy winners. Both received prizes of £20 book tokens for themselves and £100 book tokens for their school. The winners, finalists and highly commended students received a copy of the anthology and everyone else who entered was sent a certificate of participation.

Copies of the anthology are available for free* by contacting the Learning Officer and feature some outstanding pieces of creative writing by some of the young authors and poets in the county.

Clare Davison, Learning Officer



Kate Milner, author



*free until July 2017

OPENING THE ARCHIVES TO BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

As the project comes to an end, Martin Deacon looks at the project's achievements

In the early part of 2013 I applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund to fund a three-year post for a Learning Officer. When I joined Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service in 1990 we had an Education Officer whose job was to work with schools, introducing them to the service and sending them packs of facsimile documents to help them in aspects of the curriculum. This post was lost in 1993 and since that time, little work has been done with schools because there have not been the resources to do so. A full-time post devoted to working with schools, however, could do a lot in three years. Specifically it could make the service and its benefits known to all schools in the county (which helps us) and provide material from a range of sources for various types of study, not just History, but Geography, English, Art and Science (which helps them).

In March 2013 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £82,400 to fund a learning officer and to fund video-conferencing equipment (for remote lessons to schools) and other resources. The project, called *Opening the Archives to Bedfordshire Schools* ends in July this year. The project aimed to work with as many schools as possible, whether local education authority controlled, academy, free school or private in each of the three unitary council areas - Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough with one full school year devoted to each of the three areas.

Our first learning officer, Clare Rogers, was recruited and joined us in December 2013. Two years later she left having found a permanent position at The Higgins museum in Bedford. Clare Davison joined us in April 2016.

Like the Two Romnies, the Two Clares have presided over a packed programme. Some simple facts and figures will bear this assertion out:

- Every school in the county (except infant and nursery schools) has been contacted a number of times to alert them to the existence of a Learning Officer and, indeed, of Bedfordshire Archive and Record Service.
- 106 schools were identified as having larger than average percentages of students from deprived backgrounds or from ethnic minorities, or both. All these schools were given a pack of maps and other documents for their local study and other help if they requested it. 29 other schools received packs, meaning that 60% of primary and secondary schools in the county received an information pack about their local area or the subject of their choice and tailored to them.
- 20 schools were visited by the Learning Officer
- 8 schools visited the service, including multiple visits from our young archivist group.
- 2 schools elected to interact with us via video conference
- 2 games were produced: the time line game as an introduction to chronology, and an interactive computer game about Bedford in World War Two that could also be used as part of computer programming studies.

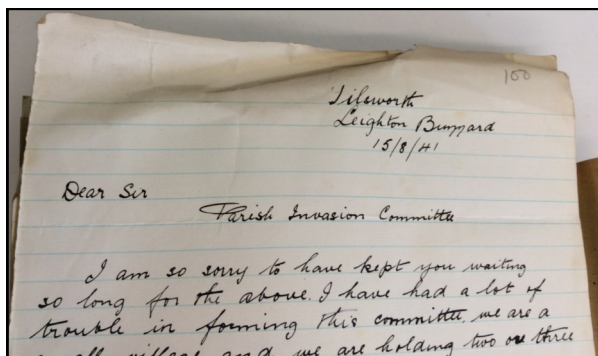
The Learning Officer worked closely with partners such as Luton Culture, the Harpur Trust, Full House Theatre Company, The Culture Challenge, Bedfordshire Museums Group, Youth Inspired, the Herts, Beds and Luton Cultural Forum, Dunstable Heritage and also attended community events such as Bedford's Big High Street Showcase and our own Heritage Open Day Treasure Hunt.

Our hope is that by introducing children to the joy of history, often "hands-on" history we can inspire them for the future. We hope that many more people in the county now know we exist and what we can do for them, given that children speak to other children, to parents, relatives and friends about "what they did at school today" and in this way we can help to preserve, nurture and grow the county's history and culture for at least another generation.

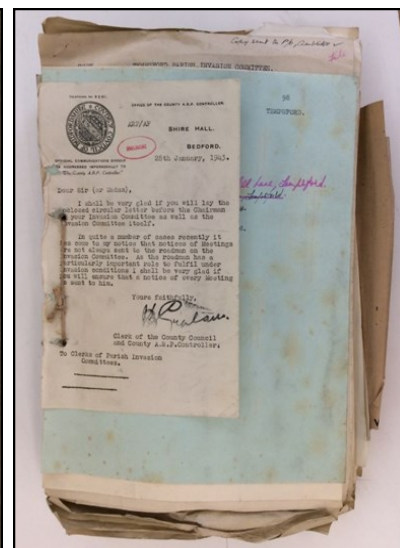


CONSERVATION CORNER

Records of the Parish Invasion Committee might call to mind episodes of the TV series *Dad's Army* as they contain: names of individuals involved in the committee, an account of activities undertaken and an indication of how resources were allocated at parish level during World War II. At Bedfordshire Archives we hold correspondence records relating to Parish Invasion Committees for all the parishes in Bedfordshire (Ref: W/INV1-4). The papers were arranged alphabetically by parish and were originally hole-punched and put in lever arch files. Later the files were removed and each bundle held together with a piece of string or tape threaded through the holes.



Parish 100, Tilsworth, showing dirt and damage to oversized pages



W/INV3-4: original 'packaging'.

From a conservation point of view this is a nightmare. The varying sizes of the documents meant that the longer items had become crumpled at each end where they had been forced into packaging more appropriate for the smaller items or placed in a box so big that the edges became crumpled as they rattled around in the box.

Where these longer items had been exposed to the atmosphere they had become very dirty and discoloured.

Perhaps more importantly, binding the documents together with tape through the holes meant that you could not open the 'file' up flat enough to be able to view some of the documents without damaging them. As multiple parishes were bundled together into large bundles if you wanted to look just at the correspondence for a single parish it came down in the bundle with 35 others; potentially causing damage to pages the researcher didn't even want to see.

In order to protect these documents the first thing we did was dis-bind the large bundle, and then check each document to see if any cleaning or repairs were needed. Fortunately no repairs were needed to any of the documents. However, all of the longer documents that had been crumpled and exposed to the atmosphere needed cleaning at the edges. Once this had been done, to protect these larger documents in the future they were placed in a custom fit polyester sleeve to give them extra-rigidity and support. Whilst checking each document for cleaning and repair we also removed any staples or pins. This is an important part of the preservation process, as pins and staples rust or corrode causing damage to the documents.

Having cleaned all of the documents, encapsulating those documents that needed extra protection with a polyester pocket and removing all of the pins - the next step was to consider how to package these documents so they could remain together alphabetically by parish, but also allow them to be produced in the search room on a per parish basis. The solution was a simple one. The documents for each parish were placed within a large alkaline-buffered folded sheet, organised alphabetically and then placed within a custom-fit, alkaline-buffered, 4-flap box. Finally the boxes were housed in larger archival boxes ready to be stored in our environmentally controlled store room.

If you are interested in finding out what sort of information can be found in these records visit <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityArchives/Flitton/FlittonParishInvasionCommittee.aspx>



Vicki Manners, Conservator

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



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