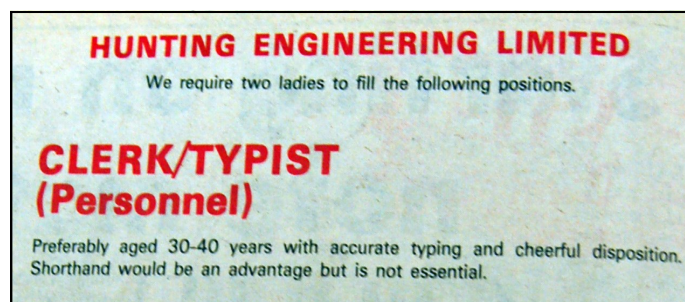


THINKING OF YOU - ALL EQUALLY

The last of our exhibitions on the theme *Thinking of You* celebrates equality and our country's moves towards it. The Equality Act 2010 was a landmark in the way the law encourages equal treatment of people in society. It was the culmination of forty years of legislation to address inequalities in Britain – a total of around 116 separate acts and regulations according to the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It has a very broad remit to tackle discrimination and is the successor to nine key pieces of legislation, the majority covering the sphere of employment: Equal Pay Act 1970, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, Equality Act 2006 Part 2, Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007.

The act created nine protected characteristics – areas in which people should expect to be treated equally—Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage & civil partnership, Pregnancy & maternity, Race, Religion & belief, Sex & Sexual orientation.

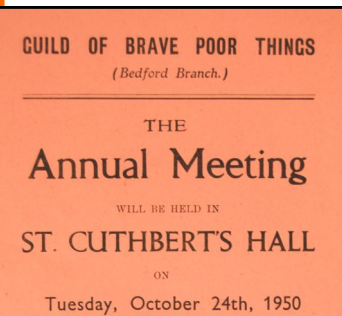
In curating the exhibition I concentrated on some of the protected characteristics most represented in our archive collections – age, disability, race, sex and sexual orientation. Whilst we have a good quantity of material on these subjects, very little of it is pictorial and it can be rather dense, requiring explanation to put it into context. One way round this was the use of newspaper headlines and advertisements, which by their nature are punchy and draw attention. In the case of the advertisements before the Sex Discrimination Act, they are short and attention-seeking and, though written in the living memory of many of us, now seem quite outlandish.



Bedford Record, 1975

We would all like to be treated well and so should afford the same courtesy to others. Be that as it may, the problem one has in putting together an exhibition like this is our inclination to look at the past through the prism of the present. This leads to usually negative judgements being made about people, institutions and customs in the past which are really not supportable.

Quite a lot of these judgements are based on the changing use of language. It is only a few years ago that my son, who suffers from cerebral palsy, would have been described, perfectly correctly, as spastic. That term then came to be used in a pejorative way by nasty children in school playgrounds (I can remember doing so myself). So the medical term spastic has had to be replaced in common parlance by a phrase such as disabled or physically disabled and the Spastic Society became Scope. In the same way I would never dream of referring to him as a cripple, in the way Charles Dickens described Tiny Tim in *Christmas Carol*. No doubt our use of the term disabled will, in a century or less, be regarded as pejorative as use of language is ever-changing.



To the reader of today The Guild of Poor Brave Things may sound patronizing. However, the aims of the society, which started in London in 1894, were intended to give the members, who were all disabled, a positive outlook. The Bedford Branch formed in 1910. Members enjoyed fortnightly social meetings, things to do, some educational opportunities and some opportunities for work as well as 'assistance in supplying surgical and other aid when funds allow' (X414/87).

I hope the exhibition provokes a few thoughts about our society today and about the past societies it invokes. Maybe an exhibition in a century's time will display attitudes from the first

THE AIM OF THE SOCIETY.

The Society is intended for men, women and children who through some physical disability are unable to play their part in the battle of life. This includes those who have lost a limb (or limbs), the Blind, Lame, Deaf and Dumb, and the Deformed; and the Committee of the Bedford Branch invite the sympathetic support and co-operation of the public in this effort to brighten the lives of those who in the town and neighbourhood are thus handicapped.

half of the 21st century which people in that distant epoch will consider barbaric, morally wrong or embarrassing – at least I hope so.

Martin Deacon, Team Leader & Archivist

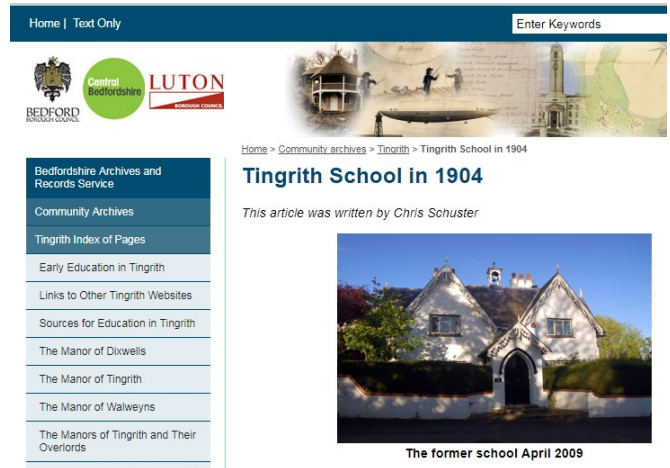
Guild of Brave Poor Things report, 1931, X414/87

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES WEBPAGES

Recently the number of our Community Archive webpages passed the 6,000 mark. These pages now cover the history of 143 communities spread over 102 historic parishes. However, there are still communities yet to be done.

Last year we recruited a number of volunteers to help us fill some of the gaps. Work could be on a community not yet represented on our pages or for additional pages on a community. The work needs to be firmly based on material that can be found at Bedfordshire Archives, although some published sources such as the Victoria County History are also used, but there are templates to help get people started. In the last few weeks a few of the fruits of our volunteers' labours have been published and these show the different approaches that are possible. Two volunteers working together have contributed pages for Little Staughton. Tingrith pages have been written by a person working alone. It is possible to research only a portion of a community if you don't feel able to commit to providing all the information for a place. Contributors are acknowledged at the top of the article they have written.

If you would like to research and write some pages for us please contact martin.deacon@bedford.gov.uk or esther.bellamy@bedford.gov.uk



CONSERVATION CORNER

In the previous edition of Conservation Corner, I discussed the work we had started on a collection of very fragile maps by William Penn.



Above: *Before*



Above: *During the iron gall treatment*

The first phase was to clean all the surface dirt of the maps, and then apply a treatment to the Iron Gall Ink to stop the ink from causing damage to the document.

After this stage each map was dried and a lining applied to it to allow 'infills' to fill in the missing pieces to make the document more stable. A Japanese paper was used for the infill, selected as matching the weight and thickness of the paper of the original document. If the repair paper is any thinner or thicker, it leaves a 'ridge' between the old and the new, which over time places a mechanical strain where the ridge is, and tearing becomes inevitable. The colour is not an exact match as conservation is more concerned with using pure materials and the correct weight paper, and does not advocate synthetic colouring.



Above: *The finished product*

Vicki Manners, conservator

SCHOOL DAYS

It's quite unusual for a child to become obsessed with family history, but then I'm prepared to admit I was an unusual child. My mum's explanations and diagrams of 'who was who' in our family was enough to have me hooked by the age of 10. But the thing that really clinched it was my Gran's photo albums, passed down from her grandmother who was born 120 years before me. Actual photographic evidence of those who went before me, sometimes with a resemblance to people I knew, was enough to ignite my interest in history. My maternal grandmother's side may have been well-to-do enough to have endless pictures taken in photographic studios across London but the same can't be said for my paternal grandmother's side, the only grandparent to originate from Bedfordshire. I had never seen any pictures of my Nan or her siblings before a family wedding photo from 1937. At least I hadn't, until a few years ago when Bedfordshire Archives were gifted a large collection of school material relating to the history, pupils and teachers of Clapham Road School in Bedford [ref: SDBedfordLIV] now called Livingstone Lower School.

School records are a rarity in terms of archival deposits. There is no statutory requirement for schools to keep any records beyond seven years after a pupil has left the school, so the regular enquiries we receive about exam results can't be answered by us. In addition, given the personal nature of school pupil and personnel files and admission registers, the Information Commissioner issued an order that they must be closed for 100 years to ensure people's privacy in line with Data Protection, so we can't help with school reunions. Photos however are not subject to these rules, and yet they are still a rare find in an archive such as ours. We certainly don't hold the long full school photos that so many of us remember from our school days. To have such a large collection of photos from just one school, like Livingstone Lower is a gift, but of course, they're usually unnamed group shots. That's where people like my Nan and great-aunt can be of great help.

Looking through the photographs gave me the unexpected treat of my great-aunt in class photos and my Nan in the netball and hockey teams. I was given permission to scan them in and take copies home to show them in the hope that they could name the children and teachers pictured with them. I recall a lovely afternoon with my Nan and her sister reminiscing about the 'Black Tom' area of Bedford where they grew up and gradually more and more names were filled in. Then, as so often happens, other things got in the way and I put the notes I'd made to one side. Eleven years later, I discovered the notes when I was having a clear out of my house. A lot had changed in that time. My great aunt is now 97, has dementia and is in a home. My Nan is now 93, still in her own home, but not in good health. Her memory isn't too bad though, so I took another look to see if there were any other pictures that I could take to my Nan for an afternoon of reminiscence work. I found some in a collection [Z912/21] deposited by the former Clapham Road School PE teacher, Miss Lorna Newbold, who is with her pupils in the hockey picture below. We had a lovely afternoon as she named most of the girls on the sports teams and recalled other children from her school class. I'm eternally grateful that I had that afternoon with her, as since I wrote this article, my Nan has passed away and now my lasting memory will be of her smiling as she relived her sporting glory days. Thanks to her and my aunt we now have names for all of the teachers and most of the pupils in these pictures below, so this article is a plea for a number of things; for more schools to deposit their material with us, for people to keep photos and add names to them where possible (and to contact us if you know the names of anyone in these pictures below) and also to those who think reminiscing is a waste of time; you couldn't be more wrong!

Laura Johnson, Customer Liaison Officer



NEWS

Our host authority, Bedford Borough Council, is in the process of restructuring its departments as part of an initiative to modernise the way that the council works. As part of this Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service will change from the Department of Democratic and Registration Services to the Department of Customer Engagement and Digital on the 30th October. This also means a change to our chief officer; we say goodbye to Keith Simmons, who has been our head of service since 2009 and hello to Lee Phanco. As the official meeting with staff was a day before our 104th birthday we thought that we would bring our birthday celebrations forward a day and have cake!



Keith Simmons (left) and Lee Phanco (right)



The fantastic cake made by our very own County Archivist!

We are delighted to announce that on the 30th October archivist Carol Walden will be joining the archive team on a short-term contract. Carol will provide some maternity cover in the searchroom but most of her time will be spent on cataloguing part of the Richardson & Houfe Architects' collection. This very large collection is nationally important; the firm worked on buildings throughout England and the collection is often required when repairs or adaptations are needed to those buildings. Bedfordshire Archives Service is therefore very pleased to have received funding from the owner of the collection to enable it to be better catalogued and easier for researchers to discover and use.



CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS: We are open **Wednesday 27th & Friday 29th December only.**
We re-open on Tuesday 2nd January 2018.



Digitisation of *A Bedfordshire Bibliography*

Bedfordshire Historical Record society is pleased to announce the completion of its pilot digitisation project. The *Bedfordshire Bibliography* and its three supplements, long out of print, are now available to view on the Society's website at <http://www.bedfordshirehrs.org.uk/content/publication/bedfordshire-bibliography>

The *Bibliography* was an initiative of the Society in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The main volume and two supplements were painstakingly compiled by L R Conisbee (an English teacher, zoologist and local historian) and the third supplement by A R Threadgill (Bedfordshire Assistant County Librarian and later a minister). Mr Conisbee delved deeply into locally-held collections of Bedfordshire material, including grey literature; took the time and trouble to identify sections on Bedfordshire in general publications; hunted down obscure items; and was given access to private collections of Bedfordshire resources. The result was an in-depth bibliography of publications about Bedfordshire history, many of which would not otherwise be easily traced today. The *Bibliography* remains a starting point for anyone working on the history of Bedfordshire and adjacent counties. Thanks are due to Bedford Borough Libraries for lending copies for digitisation and to Mr Conisbee's daughter for encouragement when the project was discussed with her.

Bedfordshire Historical Records Society are also looking for a website coordinator. If you would like to volunteer your time and skills please contact secretary@bedfordshirehrs.org.uk

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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