

WOMEN OF BEDFORDSHIRE

Our spring lobby exhibition, which runs until the end of June, focuses on the women of Bedfordshire. The exhibition showcases documents relating to the lives of ordinary women in the county and has four main themes: home life and domesticity, work, activities outside the home, and women at war. In many cases we are able to hear the voices of these women directly through their diaries, letters and other written material.

A second small exhibition in the Council Suite at Borough Hall displays items from a collection recently received by the archives relating to Charlotte Mackay Brown (nee Dalton) of Upper Dean. This collection shows how one woman's life can contribute to each of our four themes. Charlotte trained as a nurse and worked in this capacity in France during the First World War. Outside the home Charlotte was a member of the Women's Voluntary Service during the Second World War, County Commissioner for the Girl Guides, prominent in the local Women's Institute, a Justice of the Peace, and had other community roles. Finally it shows Charlotte in a home setting as she writes letters to her husband-to-be, George Mackay Brown, during their long courtship that include such domestic details as 'It was foggy on Sunday so Madge did not have the car out & my Sat letter had to wait until this a.m. to be posted—we often catch a Sunday post but the nearest entails an expedition of 5 miles...'



A Women's Police Auxiliary Telephone Operator, 1942
[ref: BTNeg1365/2]



Female staff at Bedford General Post Office, 1921
[ref: Z378/20]

Another quite recent acquisition featured in the exhibition is a set of diaries written by Leah Aynsley of Queens Park, Bedford, between 1930 to 1983. Leah worked for the Midland Motor Company and then for engineering firm W. H. Allen; she never married and continued to live in her family home until she was in her 80s. Her diaries provide an insight into all aspects of the life of an ordinary working woman during the middle years of the twentieth century. In 1932 she described the experience of having her hair permanently waved for the first time, a lengthy exercise which produced a disappointing result with the back "simply a mass of frizz which stuck straight out". The next day she complained "Father does not like my hair and says I look like an old man with a wig". Occasionally Leah became more introspective, as in this 1935 entry in which she contemplated the point of her existence:

"I often wonder why I was ever born. I am not beautiful and not particularly useful. I make no great effort for good in the world and yet I am happy. I have sometimes thought the reason why I am so happy and fortunate in life is that I appreciate so much the pleasures that God gives, so because I am so appreciative of them He keeps heaping them on me. If nobody appreciated all the beauty on earth and in life, it would be wasted effort; and therefore such as I are born."

After a pause in the diary series between 1938 and 1943 Leah started writing again for the benefit of a friend living in Canada, as she found writing letters during wartime too restrictive due to censorship. Her diary entries perfectly illustrate the mix of the mundane and the extraordinary that was a feature of wartime life:

“20th September [1943]: On Saturday afternoon I went blackberrying in the garden, and bottled some of them on Sunday. Bottling is a new art for me. I did some damsons last week, one jar a success but the other would not seal ... There was a plane burning on the hill opposite the garden; it had crashed just before I arrived. It was too far off to know the extent of the damage.”

Leah Aynsley’s diaries can be found in our catalogue under reference Z1606; her wartime entries are currently being prepared for publication.

An extensive list of sources held at the Archives for Women’s History , which includes many diaries and other personal papers, is available on our website in the “Online Sources” section under menu item “Our Holdings”. (or search for Women’s History). This list makes an excellent starting point for finding out more about women of Bedfordshire from all walks of life.

Kathryn Faulkner, Archivist

HAPPY ANNIVERSARIES

Midland Railway extension, 150 years



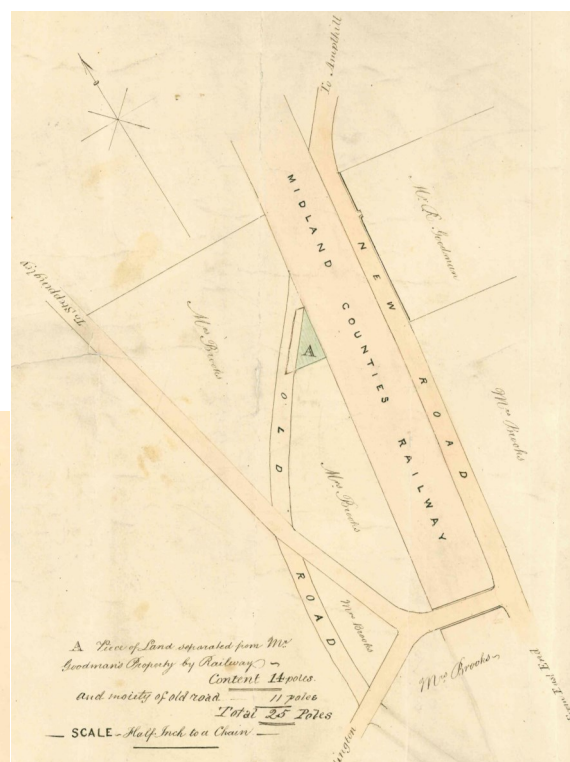
BEDFORD
AND
KEMPSTON HARDWICKE.
MIDLAND EXTENSION RAILWAY.

In consequence of the completion of the above Line,

G. GREENE

Has been favoured with Instructions from MESSRS. BRASSEY AND BALLARD to SELL BY AUCTION,
On Wednesday & Thursday, Nov. 20 & 21. 1867
At 10 for 11 o'clock in the Forenoon each Day, the undermentioned valuable

BUILDING MATERIALS
BUILDING BRICKS,
PANTILES, BRICK KILNS
DEALS, BATTENS, &c., &c.,
6 TONS OF SCRAP IRON
16-HORSE-POWER
PORTABLE STEAM ENGINE
BRICK MACHINERY, 1,200 BRICK COVERS,
AND NUMEROUS OTHER ARTICLES.



13th July 1868 saw the opening of the extension of the Midland railway line from Bedford to London via Luton. Passengers could now travel from Bedford to Luton in 48 minutes rather than the two and a quarter hours that journeys had previously taken. Trains stopped at the new stations of Ampthill, Harlington and Leagrave along the way.

National Health Service, 70 years

In July 1948 the National Health Service came into being. Central government took on some services that had been run locally and other services that had been voluntary, such as the Bedfordshire Nursing Association, became the responsibility of local councils. The changes were generally welcomed.

- Leagrave station c. 1909 Ref: Z1306/75/12/21.
- Sale of surplus materials on completion of the line, 1867. Ref: SF33/3
- Change to the route of the Ampthill/Flitwick road to make way for the railway, c1864. Ref: LL17/343



Trainee midwives at Luton & Dunstable hospital c. 1960. Ref: HoL/PH1/8

A 'patient' washing competition probably at Bromham Hospital fete, c 1958. Ref: HoBC/C/2/1

What does the new data protection legislation mean for the archive service and your contact with us?

You may have heard that Data Protection legislation is changing. If you belong to organisations or have signed up to receive marketing you have probably already received a communication asking you to reaffirm your consent to be contacted. This is because the new legislation puts a greater emphasis on the rights of living people and requires anyone processing data about those people to manage it in particular ways.

Councils, such as Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough, naturally hold a lot of data about living individuals both those who use their services and those who pay for them and it is important that they comply with the law. Bedford Borough Council has created a new post to ensure that departments are working correctly. Ann Jones, who had been Team Leader for the records management side of Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service since 2014, was appointed to this role and Ann left our service at the end of February to take up this role.



The archive service holds personal data on:

- The people who visit it
- The people who make enquiries
- The people who receive our newsletter
- The people who receive details of our events
- The people who deposit records with us
- The people who appear in the records we hold

You may fall into one or more of those categories!

In order to comply with the law we have to process the data we hold lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. We can only collect it for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes. It has to be relevant and limited to what is necessary and steps must be taken to ensure that it is accurate and kept up to date. It must be stored in a way that protects it against unauthorised or unlawful processing, against accidental loss, destruction or damage. Usually the data should be kept for no longer than necessary for the original purpose however, personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes. Let's go back to the list of what we, as an archive service, hold so that you can see how we comply in detail.

- Visitor details—name, address, subject of research. These are collected as part of our public task. They are kept for 10 years for security reasons in case anything goes wrong with our security measures and something goes astray. Unfortunately this can happen and although Bedfordshire Archives has not been involved in court proceedings we have been asked to check records where criminal prosecutions are being brought.
- Enquirers —contact details, subject of research. These are collected to enable us to respond to your enquiries. They are kept for 10 years in case you contact us again. You would be surprised how many communications we receive that begin 'I contacted you some years ago and now want to carry on where I left off'.
- Newsletter and events mailing lists— if you consent to us sending either our newsletter or events information to you we need your contact details. We only keep you on the list for as long as you want to be there. If you no longer wish to receive information from us then just let us know and your details will be removed.
- People who deposit records with us. We endeavour to maintain ongoing relationships with our depositors to enable us to manage the collections we hold in line with the agreed terms of deposit. We maintain a database which permanently records names and contact details of all our depositors. This information enables us to contact depositors should any questions arise about the material given or loaned to us. It is also a vital part of understanding the provenance of the records. We work hard to keep our records up-to-date, however it remains the responsibility of the depositor to keep the service informed of any change of details. Our database also records contact details of any depositor's representative responsible for handling the transfer of the records to the care of the archives service, for example the churchwarden of a parish church or the chairperson of an organisation. We realise that this connection with the organisation is subject to change and we will happily remove contact details of representatives from the database should they no longer be relevant to the management of the deposit. Please contact us to advise us of any changes.
- Finally there is the data we hold within our collections. This data is held as part of our public task under article 89 of the General Data Protection Regulations. We only keep what we believe to be potentially useful for historical research and we can only keep what is offered to us. This means we do not have every record. What we do have will be kept safe and secure as part of the archives and can only be accessed and used for certain purposes under certain conditions.

Pamela Birch, Service Manager

CALL FOR COMMUNITY ARCHIVE VOLUNTEERS

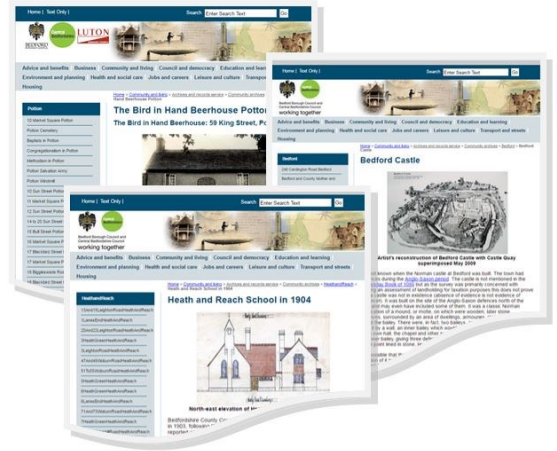
Our Community Archive webpages contain more than 6,000 articles about the history of 143 local communities, churches, manors, schools, pubs and buildings. We've still got a way to go before every local community is represented online so last year we recruited a number of volunteers to work on researching and writing articles for us. The work they've completed so far - on the parishes of Little Staughton, Tingrith, Carlton and Chellington - is already online.

If you think you could help produce similar work on another community then we'd love to hear from you. The articles you write would need to be based on material that can be found at Bedfordshire Archives but you're free to also use your own local knowledge and any published resources you can find. There's plenty of support on hand from staff, templates to help you get started and you don't have to commit to a whole parish, just one subject area or building is fine.

Individuals or groups are welcome and we'd particularly like to hear from any local history societies who'd like to co-ordinate efforts for their area. We can even use the Community Archives website to host any research you may already have written up. All work will be fully attributed and your name will appear at the top of any articles we post.

You can view some of the work that staff and volunteers have already carried out on this project at: <http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityAndLiving/ArchivesAndRecordOffice/CommunityArchives>

If you have any questions or if you'd like to volunteer you can contact us at archive@bedford.gov.uk.



NEWS



We have said goodbye to Martin Deacon, our Archives Team Leader, who has left us to work at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies on a deeds project. Martin had worked at Bedfordshire Archives for 28 years, first in the Records Management Service, as archivist, and latterly as part of the search room team and as Team Leader. His knowledge and expertise in military history, deeds, education records and his brilliant work on our Community Archives project will be much missed.

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Bedfordshire Archives will be at the Heritage Bedford stand at the Bedford High Street Showcase on **Saturday 2nd June, from 10am to 4pm**. Come down to see us, play our new game about women of Bedfordshire and find out more about archives!

Heritage Bedford, a collaboration between Bedford's arts, leisure and culture providers, will also be at Bedford River Festival on **Saturday & Sunday 14th-15th July**.



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](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk) Online at: [www.bedford.gov.uk/archive](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/archive)

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