

OUR REPRESENTATIVES

At the end of our year of thinking about the extension of the right to vote we turn our attention to those who were voted for and how they went on to represent those who elected them.

In the last 100 years the rural county of Bedfordshire has returned predominately Conservative members to parliament, while the towns of Luton and Bedford have seen a more mixed picture. Bedford in particular is considered to have reflected changes in the country as a whole.



Cpl. E. K. MARTELL, R.A.F.

The Liberal Candidate.

TO MEMBERS OF THE SERVICES—

At the invitation of the Mid Beds. Liberal Association I am offering myself as Liberal Candidate for the Mid Beds. Constituency in which I live. I am being supported by the Liberal Association and also by many progressives of other Parties and unattached, who realise that the only means of excluding Mr. Lennox-Boyd is by returning a Liberal. I make no complaint of the Labour Party putting up a candidate, for indeed it would be undemocratic for me to do so, but I only need to increase the Liberal poll by 25% and Labour would have to increase their poll by 400% to have any

**CONFIRM YOUR
CONFIDENCE IN
CHURCHILL**



One example is the 1945 General Election. The Conservative and National Government under Churchill was seen to have won the war but the result of the election that followed was a surprise landslide victory for the Labour party. In Mid Bedfordshire the Conservative candidate, Alan T Lennox-Boyd had been the constituency's Member of Parliament since 1931 and he retained his seat albeit with a reduced majority. Bedfordshire Archives has an interesting collection of Mid Beds constituency election material for the 1945 election (Z1599).

In Bedford, the Conservative candidate, Richard Wells, who had been Bedford's MP since 1922, was beaten by the Labour Party's Thomas Skeffington-Lodge. In her diary Leah Aynsley recounts how on the eve of the

election she dreamt that she was elected as Bedford's MP; 'at first I was elated & felt important at the idea of putting MP after my name, & thought how impressed the folk at Igranic would be...Then I suddenly realized it meant I would have to attend Parliament frequently & perhaps make speeches & I immediately refused to be MP.' When the real election results were announced Leah wrote it 'must have been a great shock for Mr Churchill, but they ought never to have called for an election at this stage.' (Z1606/6).

**MID-BEDS. DIVISIONAL
LABOUR PARTY**
invite you to a
PUBLIC MEETING
at
The "Five Bells" Corner, HENLOW
AND
The Council Schools, LANGFORD
on
WEDNESDAY, 13th JUNE, 1945
Commence at
HENLOW 7 p.m. LANGFORD 8 p.m.
**as part of their campaign for
increased membership**

In Luton there had been a Liberal MP since 1929, Leslie Burgin. He stood down at the 1945 election and the National Liberal candidate, Bruno Brown, was defeated by the Labour candidate, William Warbey.

Pamela Birch, County Archivist

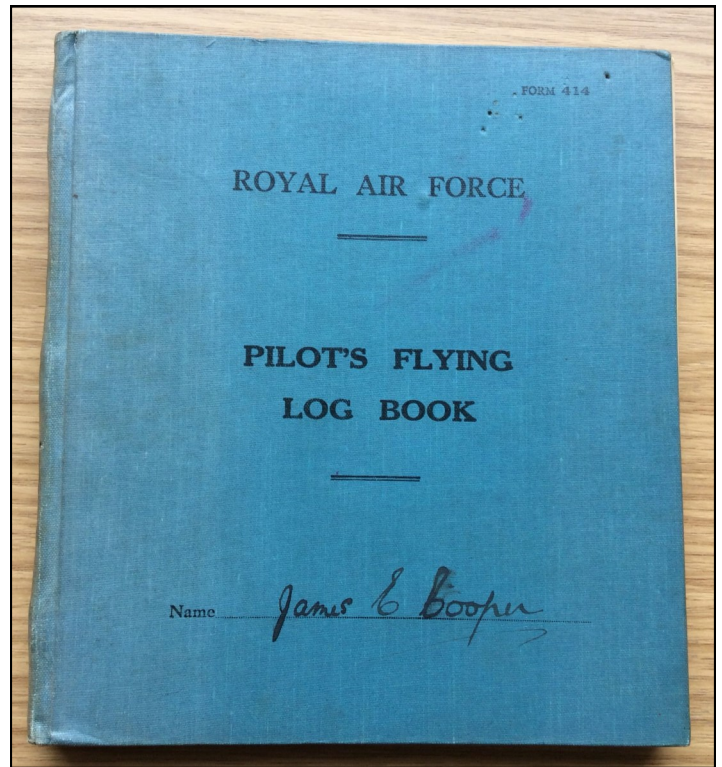
This election poster, in favour of the Liberal candidates in the Luton Poor Law Guardian's election of 1920, was recently donated to the archives service. Women were able to vote and stand in this type of election long before they were allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections. Florence Carter, the wife of a Luton schoolmaster, was one of several women to be elected. [Reference Z1693]

NORTH WARD
Guardians' Election, 1920.
**POLLING DAY,
MONDAY NEXT,
MARCH 29th**
**VOTE
FOR**
**JAMES BONE,
THOMAS E. BREADSELL
FLORENCE CARTER,
JOSEPH H. HAWKES
ERNEST W. NEWAY,**
Who, if Elected, will Study the
Interests of ALL Classes.
Printed and Published by Gibbs, Banbury & Co.,
Manchester Street, Luton.

A PILOT'S EYE VIEW

During our closed week I caught up with some of our outstanding cataloguing and found a little gem, a Royal Air Force Pilot's Flying Log Book belonging to James Emerton Cooper (Ref: Z1689/1, pictured right). A note in the front indicates that this was his second book as the first was lost in December 1940. This one will be safe in the Archives!

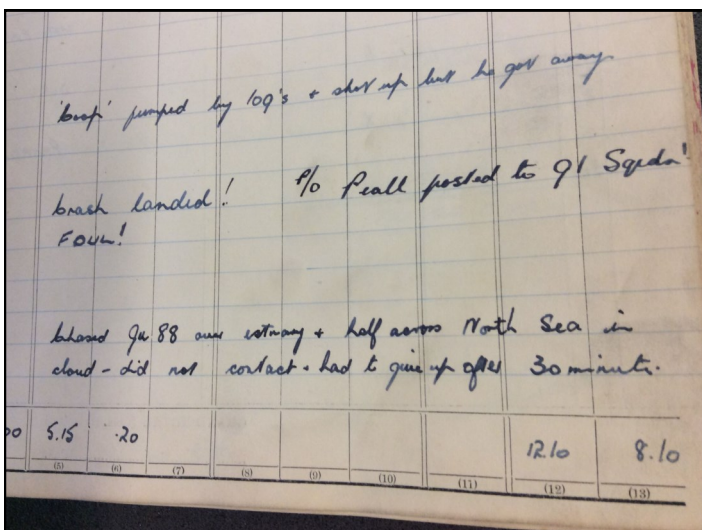
The book includes details of Cooper's RAF history beginning with the Luton Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School in April 1939 and ending with his death off Dungeness, Kent on 9 September 1941. It records the aircraft numbers of Spitfires and Magisters and hours flown and the duties he carried out such as patrols over the English Channel and France. Cooper includes comments which add a personal dimension. He details contact with enemy aircraft and shipping as well as references to fellow pilots.



A look online for background information found one website of particular note, Aircrew Remembered. It includes an account by Herbert Denchfield detailing his time in the RAF. His early training was shared with Cooper, who Denchfield calls Ollie. The account provides an insight into Cooper's personality. Denchfield recalls the bets made between the two of them in the race to complete various aspects of their training.

I turned to the Luton News and found a report of Cooper's funeral at Luton General Cemetery in Rothesay Road on 18 September 1941. His address is given as 9 Beech Road and that he had worked at the Luton Corporation Parks Department as a storekeeper clerk, was involved with Beech Hill Methodist Guild and that he was only 22 when he died. The newspaper also records that it is believed that Cooper was the first pilot to shoot down the new Messerschmitt 109F. Cooper details an incident with 109s on 17 August 1941, a 'head on attack developed into hell of mêlée' and 'home like the clappers as more 109s piled in'.

The newspaper records the mourners and wreaths and includes ex-workmates, representatives from Luton Modern School, friends and neighbours as well as Cooper's family. The 1911 census shows Cooper's parents and sister, Gladys, living at the same address in Beech Road. His parents are both listed as working in the straw hat industry, Albert as a blocker and Margaret working at home as a machinist.



The LMS school magazines (Ref: SDLutonSFC2) show Cooper joining the School in 1933. The September 1935 issue records him as captain for the school 2nd XI versus Wolverton County School 2nd XI match played at Chaul End on 30 March 1935 which ended 4-4. Cooper's Cambridge School Certificate is listed in the Christmas 1935 issue and his death is recorded along with other Old Boys killed on active service in the 1942 issue.

The log book has given me the opportunity to look at a brief life and the part that he played in World War II through his own words, those of his friends and the records held at Bedfordshire Archives.

Carol Walden, Archivist



WHO OR WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

A group of dedicated volunteers have been trying to identify pictures from the former County Council's photographic unit. Despite their best and most diligent efforts, we need your help to work out where and who these pictures are of. Please contact us if you can help.

Left: We believe this place of worship to be a non-conformist chapel, either Baptist, Methodist or Congregational, given the history of our county's religious houses. Does it look familiar?



Above & Left: The picture on the left is labelled 'Oakley Albums' and has Lord Ampthill of Oakley written on the back of it, although we're not sure which, if any, of the Lords Ampthill it might be. The picture above has the same reference number so may well be boys from Oakley. They look like they might be brothers, but perhaps they're friends, relations or a group of boys from the church choir? Any ideas?



Left: This picture looks to be of a lodge and was found in a collection labelled 'reproduction of slides relating to Luton in 1800s' so can anyone familiar with Luton's history tell us where this property was situated? We're fairly sure it's now been demolished. We've tried to identify it by the coat of arms on the side of the house above the window, but without success. All suggestions gratefully received!

NEWS

Staff changes

We say hello to – Carol Walden & Helen Bates, our new archivists and Alison Faden, our new conservator. We are also recruiting to two new posts in the Records Management team.

We say goodbye to – Beata Zyzanska, who worked on our wills project; in October Lyn Scadding takes her well-deserved retirement and in November John Gurney, records access officer and Tara Egan, FOI officer leave us.

Changes to our family history enquiry service

Changes to our staffing mean that we can no longer offer a full research service for family history research. In future researchers who require a detailed investigation and report on their family tree will need to engage the services of a private researcher. We will continue to carry out specific simple enquiries and enquiries that require access to normally closed records.

Luton through a lens: 15th - 22nd November 2018 at Luton Central Library.

Bedfordshire Archives are delighted to have recently received a wonderful collection of photographs of Luton taken by James George Rhind (1915-1995). Helping us to identify some of these photographs proved popular at our recent Heritage Open Day Event and as a follow up to this we will be displaying a selection of these photographs at Luton Central Library during normal opening hours.

On Thursday 22nd November we invite you to come and help us to identify more images of Luton in the 1970s and 1980s. Spend a morning or afternoon: sharing memories of what the town was like 40 years ago or just enjoying looking at the pictures. Why not jot down some of your memories in our scrapbook or take inspiration from the images for some new creative writing or art?



Dates for your diaries

We hope to have regular events at Luton Libraries on Thursdays during 2019. The proposed dates are the first Thursday of every other month: 7th February, 4th April, 6th June, 1st August, 3rd October, 5th of December. We hope to begin with a talk or activity and follow this with a general Q&A drop in session. Details are still to be decided so if you have any particular requests please do contact us. Further details in our Winter newsletter or via our website and social media.

We are also thinking about our programme for those of you in Central Bedfordshire so do watch out for details.

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

 twitter.com/Bedsarchives  facebook.com/BedfordshireArchives



Luton

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