

### ARCHIVES FOR ALL SEASONS

Over the last few years we have chosen some quite intense subjects as the themes for our lobby exhibitions—urban growth, refugees, equality, elections, the extension of the franchise, and the impact of two world wars. This year we decided on a theme that may prove to be a little lighter and more eclectic – taking a look at the seasons of the year through our archives. Each exhibition is curated by a different archivist and it will be interesting to see if and how that is reflected in the material included.

### WINTER

In the UK winter is probably the least popular of the four months as it is dark, cold and wet. In preparing the exhibition I found that a line from a letter by Sir Anthony Wingfield of Ampthill House summed it up nicely. Writing to Sidney Matthews, Sir Anthony declared 'winter is well enough if you have plenty of fuel, clothes and food' [AU10/31/1/7]. This was definitely a sentiment reflected in our archive collections.

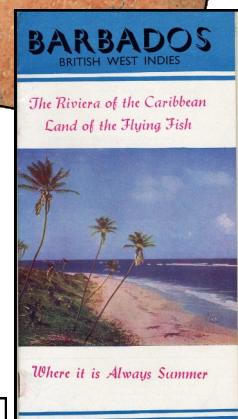
Firewood is mentioned in wills, content sales, household accounts and criminal proceedings. When mentioned in leases it is often as a right to gather firewood, for example in 1684 it was agreed that as part of his lease of The Lodge at Harrold Park William Belfeld should have yearly 6 loads of firewood from within the park 'to be burned and spent within the said house called the Lodge' (ref: L7/51). On the other hand, when Agnes Pippard granted her lands in Ravensden to Robert Vynis in 1423, part of the payment due to Agnes was a cartload of firewood at Ladyday and Michaelmas (ref: TW110). Coal is similarly referred to but as it had to be brought into Bedfordshire from elsewhere we also see more evidence of its value in trade accounts, charities and coal clubs. The latter, such as those at Eggington and Keysoe, helped members to save money on their fuel bills by buying from the supplier in bulk. Household accounts are often very detailed when it comes to fuel. The recently catalogued accounts of Henrietta Argenti of Picts Hill, Turvey, show that it was not always easy to heat a large house. In 1932 Henrietta exclaims about her bill for coal and anthracite 'considering this is the first year we had electric fires this is enormous' (ref: X928/1/3/3/7) and in 1941 she faced the prospect of the coal she had ordered being commandeered by the government for the war effort (ref: X928/1/3/3/11).

Clothing charities existed in several parishes and again the bequest of clothing in wills reflects the value. In 1895 Elizabeth Seabrook sent a note of wishes to her solicitor which reads "I have this morning been putting away my Winter Stockings. There are 6 prs of my knitting and if I should not be living to want them another Winter I wish them to be given to my good Servant Sarah Harris also the two pink pr of Woollen Knickers..." Unfortunately for Sarah, Elizabeth lived another 10 years.

Winter is not all doom and gloom, winter sports and pastimes also feature in the archives. We are currently cataloguing a large collection of theatre advertisements, which include a number of pantomimes (Z1365). Dr G H Fowler, the father of our service, was a keen skater and skier and his collection (M13) includes a programme for the exhibition he helped put on at the Alpine Club in 1902. For those who prefer to go in search of some winter sunshine the collection of Sir Herbert Janes (JN) includes brochures for his 1951-2 winter holiday to the Caribbean.

Pamela Birch, County Archivist.

Refs: X928uncat, P48/25/1, JN73/15



**Dorothy Jamieson, author of the latest Bedfordshire Historical Record Society volume *Willington and the Mowbrays* has shared with us some reflections on some of the unexpected discoveries that can emerge from local medieval documents**

Historians can see much more in medieval documents than the scribes intended. A good example is the records of the lay manors of Willington. In the 15th century this was a single-manor parish on the edge of the extensive Mowbray estates. About the time of the Peasants' Revolt the demesne lands were granted to four tenants; the customary lands were granted out in several standard lots and all were managed by a bailiff-accountant who was often a local man.

The records for Willington reveal a reciprocal relationship between the lord or lady's officials and the leaders of the manor community; they depended on each other. As they experienced the transition from the Peasants' Revolt to 'the dawn of capitalism' some tenants benefited from the determination of the lords and ladies to protect their income and maintain the value of their properties. In 1382, the year after the peasants' Revolt, unfree tenants in Willington were described as acremen, molemen, cottars or bondsmen; in the years to follow, most unfree tenants were described as villeins. At first the lord or lady had considered them as property but after the middle of the fifteenth century differences between free and unfree tenants became less obvious.

For many years in the late 14th and 15th centuries the bailiffs bound the community together. The stewards and other officials visited twice a year and the open-field system required self-restraint, co-operation and self-discipline from the tenants. They were fined when they cut down important trees on their holdings or did not repair their buildings but some timber was provided for repairs. The most notable bailiff was Robert Gostwyk, whose family was closely linked with the manor for at least 400 years. He was the Mowbrays' bailiff-accountant from before 1381 to 1393, being paid 20s a year.

Courts were held twice a year, with the more important being the View of Frankpledge, held in the autumn. The farming year dominated much of the business of the courts; the by-laws and custom of the manor were understood, but seldom written down. When they were, they governed playing quoits and tennis, keeping dogs, sheep, pigs, calves, bullocks, ducks and drakes, grazing animals in fields after harvest and maintenance of water courses. The heavy clay soils of the arable fields meant that it was important to keep ditches and waterways clear.

John Kempston, the Woodward, was accused of dishonesty in 1421. His sales of underwood had been concealed and he was accused of selling about 60 pairs of rabbits. Suspicions of other dishonesty may have led John Mowbray, 2nd Duke of Norfolk, to appoint Robert of Willington as Keeper of the Warren. Robert was paid 60 shillings 8 pence a year and his wages were raised to £6 16s a year in 1432. Two constables were elected at some Views of Frankpledge. An unusual choice in 1405 was Adam Warde, almost certainly a villein. He was fined in 1394 for trespassing with his colts and for another offence in 1395. In 1405 he was fined for assault and for not collecting fines. Later he had ruined buildings and was accused of debt.

Bailiffs appointed from outside the manor were seldom mentioned more than once, and outsiders who trespassed in the manor were prosecuted. In October 1451 a new resident appeared just once in the rolls; Emma Skynner held a common brothel or bawdy house, and the bailiff was ordered to put her outside the demesne.

There was a ford across the Ouse and in 1468 the court roll said that the lane leading as far as the river belonged to the lord, and was common way for his tenants and others, but that only Willington tenants were allowed to pasture their animals there. Others who did so without permission risked having all their goods confiscated.

Between 1397 and 1416 some tenants tried to extend their holdings by making illegal enclosures and blocking tracks. Similar behaviours were recorded after May 1448, when some also closed footpaths across their lands without permission. There were disputes about the repair of hedges in the 1450s and the vicar was ordered to enclose the Glebe land. In the 1460s John Fage and Richard Hatley illegally cultivated the lands of Elizabeth Maryon, and in 1469 Richard Hatley enclosed the common field facing Castle Mill, across the Ouse, and put a pea stack on it. In 1470 four of the manor elite obstructed common watercourses near their tenements, so denying water or drainage to their neighbours' fields; each was fined 12d.

The Mowbrays had eight vacant holdings in Willington in 1394 and concern about finding good tenants continued throughout the fifteenth century. Entry fines soon ceased to be charged and heriots (payment to inherit after a death) were not paid after 1448. Katherine duchess of Norfolk allowed some rents to be reduced in 1440; sometimes the bailiff let holdings in small parcels and took responsibility for the rest himself. The former demesne lands were divided into 11 lots and leased for three years to 12 tenants in May 1449; in 1454 they refused to cultivate them. Ruined buildings may have made holdings difficult to let. A new local steward, Roger Hunte of Roxton, was employed from 1425 to 1426, and John Kempston, woodward, was given a holding, without rent, to repair the buildings. William Launcelyn, of nearby Cople, was also granted holdings without rent 'to repair' between 1448 to 1455, but was very slow to repair them. By September 1515, 65 buildings needed repair at a time when the Howards, dukes of Norfolk, were preparing to sell the manor.

Only 10% of the people named in the Willington court rolls were women. In 1420, Agnes Abel was described as a common chatterbox and disturber of the peace; in 1450 Agnes Judde stole a sheet and a kerchief; in 1456 Agnes Partryche stole two pairs of stockings worth 4d; in 1463 Alisia Dylerton, wife of William, assaulted John, son of John Roper, with her fists; in 1471 Elizabeth Redy and Elizabeth Langton were described as jugulaciones (rubberneckers?). Some women received pensions; the Mowbrays paid an annuity to Joan Caule, for life, from 1388. It was 10 marks a year (£3 13s 4d) a generous sum; Christina Verne and Amicia Placer were promised maintenance for life in 1409, perhaps by their sons-in-law; in 1453 a widow took a holding with her two sons who may have agreed to provide for her maintenance. Increasingly women appear as brewers. Alicia Stoughton brewed once with her husband in 1452 and went on to become a constant brewer from 1453 to 1467.

Working with these late medieval documents has proved fascinating, especially when they pose questions to which there are no answers because of missing documents. Sometimes the loss of a document seems to have been deliberate to hide information about disturbances caused by problems and disagreements.

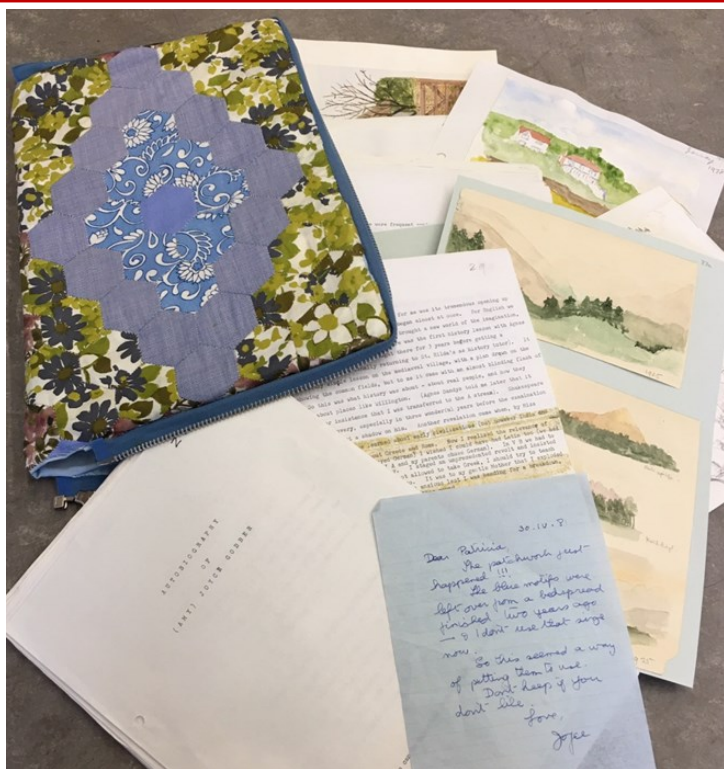
This article was originally published in longer form in *The Historian*, Autumn 2019. Dorothy Jamieson's translations and calendars of the Willington manor court rolls can all be found on the Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service website.

### Conservation Corner

In 1980 a much later resident of Willington compiled her autobiography.

Joyce Godber had been acting clerk of records and then county archivist at Bedfordshire Record Office from 1942-1969 and so it is no surprise that her autobiography was given to the archive service but on the understanding that it would not be available for public access until 20 years after her death. The end of this embargo was reached on the 1st January 2020 and naturally there has been interest in knowing what Joyce had to say for herself.

The typewritten text is illustrated with original watercolours, drawings, letters and photographs and is contained in a zipped patchwork folder made by Joyce. In a note to her successor, Miss Bell, Joyce wrote that 'the patchwork just happened!!!' however, on p155 Joyce says 'Patchwork has often seemed to me like life. In the first place you do the best you can with the material you have...or course you can increase your basic ration by initiative.'



Z153/41 Autobiography of (Amy) Joyce Godber

The autobiography is currently undergoing conservation and a variety of conservation issues are involved, which will be described in more detail in the next newsletter.



## CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS—PLEASE HELP TO FILL THE ARCHIVES GAP— GREENSAND COUNTRY PHOTO PROJECT

From the 1890s to the 1990s many photographers took high quality photographs to record the heritage of the county – these included the local newspapers, the in-house photographer of the County Council and a number of photographers—both amateur and professional. Since the dawn of the digital age, the demise of local newspapers and the reduction in local government in-house facilities, Bedfordshire Archives Service has received very few record quality images of the county and few photographers take and deposit photographs of a suitable standard for preservation as records for historical research. This leaves a significant gap in the archival record.



Now, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund via the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership, and your help we have an opportunity to begin to fill the gap. We are running a project to capture record quality photographs of the Greensand Country for the archives.

There will be three workshops for participants at the Working Woodlands Centre, Maulden Wood, Haynes West End, Bedfordshire, MK45 3UZ. Between each workshop participants will get out and about taking the images we need. There will then be an exhibition of selected photographs during the Greensand Country Festival in May. We will repeat the workshops in the autumn for another exhibition in 2021, and, of course, the photographs will be added to the collections of Bedfordshire Archives as a research resource for generations to come.

**Sat 29 Feb 2020 9.30-12.30** - Workshop 1 participants will meet with archive staff and volunteers to discuss what makes a good photograph for the archival record and to choose categories to provide a framework for the images we would like to capture.

**Saturday 14 Mar 9.30-12.30** - Workshop 2 participants meet to check on progress and see what gaps we would still like to fill.

**Saturday 18 Apr 9.30-12.30** - Workshop 3 participants meet to select the best images in each category to be printed and mounted and the images to display digitally as part of a slide show at the exhibition.

We are expecting images to be high resolution digital (although if you want to create traditional gelatine prints you are welcome to submit them). Due to the funding of the project they must be connected to the area covered by Greensand Country (but that is 137 square miles). The archives requires assignment of copyright to enable them to be used as research resource available to everyone. Further details available on request.

To take part in the project please contact us on 01234 228833 or [archive@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk)

### MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2nd Feb 2020—*Hatters' Heritage Roadshow*—The Swan Hotel, Embankment, Bedford 11-4pm

7th March, 4th April, 13 June *Weaving Narratives* workshops.



Photos by Eric Meadows (1924-2009)  
taken in 1958, 1960 & 1978. Ref Z265

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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