

### DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY TIME THE DAY WE WENT TO....

*The Archives Service has been out and about at a series of events and it has been wonderful to be back explaining and promoting the service.*



In May we helped Leighton Buzzard celebrate their market with a day of fun activities. Those who braved the intermittent hail and torrential rain learnt about: paying market tolls in pre-decimal coinage, the case of the missing pork and reading old handwriting as well as about our service.

June saw archivist Tom Larnar (inset) take our stand and give his first public talk on behalf of the office at the Bedfordshire Local History Associations' conference. Hosted by Bedfordshire Historical Records Society, the theme was Life on the Home Front in Bedfordshire. Tom's talk focused on records for Luton in World War Two.



At the Bedford River Festival in July , we enticed festival goers to test or improve their knowledge of the geography and history of Bedfordshire villages along the Great Ouse. Laura Church, Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council, (right) demonstrated excellent knowledge of the Borough.





## MEANWHILE, IN THE OFFICE

*We have enjoyed explaining the work of the service and sharing some of our more unusual items.*



In May we welcomed five students from Bedford Sixth Form College for a week's work experience. During their time with us, they sorted 19th century legal papers; catalogued building plans; identified, catalogued and packaged glass plate negatives; sorted and box-listed an incoming collection, and helped put together the activities for the following week's Leighton Buzzard market event. They also demonstrated their initiative, attention to detail and team working skills.

Being with us for only a week, the students didn't get to see any project through to a conclusion, but since they left us, work has continued. We have completed the work on the glass plate collection and an undergraduate work experience placement, with us for the summer, is cataloguing the collection that the students box listed. The glass plates have already proved useful in answering an enquiry.

Recently, as part of their training, the new Bedford tour guides visited the office for an introduction to the work of Bedfordshire Archives. They were particularly excited to see some of the historic maps of Bedford that show the features which they explain during their tours. It was lovely to meet them again at the Heritage Bedford Stand at the River Festival.

In early August, we had an evening group visit to the office by the Maypole Heritage group. The evening flew by with tours behind the scenes and the opportunity to look at some documents relevant to their local area of Northill and Ickwell, including the rare 16th century paper parish register from 1562 [P10/1/1] and, unusual for us, the flag of the Volunteer Horse Artillery raised in 1803 by John Harvey of Ickwell Bury [HY968].



The items prompted feedback that 'The King Charles Charter & the Muster Roll were

wonderful, the flag intriguing & our Church records are in good hands!'



## CONSERVATION CORNER

*Conservator Alison Faden unravels the original design for a well-known Bedford landmark*

When the Debenhams store in Bedford closed, a small amount of archive material was passed by Debenhams to Bedfordshire Archives as an addition to the X679 collection we already held. At the same time, Bedford Borough Council's conservation section began to ask us to research some buildings on the High Street as part of the High Street Action Zone. This prompted the County Archivist to start work on an article about the Debenhams building that fronts High Street and Silver Street in Bedford. Research soon revealed that BorBP8883/10, a 1930 pencil on tracing paper architectural sketch of proposed redevelopment of 48, 50, 52 and 54 High Street for E P Rose, was in need of conservation.

Transparent papers are notoriously challenging for paper conservators as, over time, they become brittle, particularly when folded - which of course happens all the time to documents issuing from architects' offices. Drawings such as this one will have been posted out to clients folded, and stored folded. They can be difficult to handle and they are springy, with a strong tendency to curl. Attempts at unfolding and flattening can easily lead to new cracks forming along old folds. In this case, the drawing had also been rolled and crushed at some point, so getting it back into one piece was a bit like doing a jigsaw puzzle.

Transparent papers were often manufactured using oils, which can make repair adhesion a problem. To make matters worse, transparent papers often seem to be extremely sensitive to water, cockling and shrinking unevenly when water is introduced.

In the conservation studio, the first challenge was to flatten the paper. A 'sandwiching' technique using Goretex fabric allows water vapour in to 'relax' the folds but prevents any water droplets coming into direct contact with the paper.

Paper repairs were made using a variety of weights of fine Japanese papers, adhered verso with conservation grade starch paste, to support and consolidate the damaged substrate.

The repaired sketch was mounted onto supportive board inside a new protective folder. It is now safely stored flat at Bedfordshire Archives.



**BorBP8883/10 before and after conservation.**



## NEWS



Archive Service Accreditation is awarded for six years. Bedfordshire Archives was first accredited in 2016 and therefore in spring this year we submitted our reapplication. The national accreditation panel sat in July and 'were pleased to make the second award of Archive Service Accreditation to Bedfordshire Archives, which they recognised as a well-managed archive service meeting national standards.'

### New Archivists

Tom Larnier became one of our full-time archivists in November 2021 and Natasha Kikas joined the team as our part time archivist in April this year on the retirement of the previous post holder, Kathryn Faulkner. For both Tom and Natasha, this is their first role since qualifying as archivists and they recently discussed their experiences as part of the Explore Your Archive blog pages. You can read more here <https://www.exploreyourarchive.org/from-the-course-to-the-county-archive-the-experiences-of-two-new-archivists/>

## FOR YOUR DIARY

### Flitwick Library—Talks and Workshops

We are pleased to announce an autumn programme of events to be held at Flitwick Library.

- 15 Sep 1330-1430** **To the Manor Born.** In this centenary year of the Law of Property Act, which brought to an end the manorial system of landholding in place since before the Norman Conquest, our talk takes a look at manors and the documents they created, using examples from Bedfordshire Archives to show that manorial documents are fantastic sources for family and social history
- 13 Oct 1230-1430** **Introduction to palaeography:** "That looks amazing".. But what does it actually say? Come along to this workshop and learn the basics to decipher and read historic handwriting using examples from Bedfordshire Archives. During the session, you will become familiar with recognising letterforms and learn strategies to deal with challenging documents. **To book call 01234 228833 or email [archive@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk)**
- 10 Nov 1330-1430** **Beyond Bunyan: Bedfordshire's Other Authors** - Looking in-depth at a series of 'forgotten' or less well-known authors, including the fourth Poet Laureate Nicholas Rowe; novelist Mark Rutherford; and the 'Bard of Woburn', George Castleden. The talk examines the work and lives of these writers as well as specifying material of interest held regarding literary artefacts more generally in Bedfordshire archives.
- 08 Dec 1230-1430** **Family History for Beginners** is the ideal workshop to help you get started researching your family's history. Learn how to start your search, the basic foundations, the records and resources available and how and when to use them. Get started on your family's story. **To book call 01234 228833 or email [archive@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:archive@bedford.gov.uk)**

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