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BLHA Annual Conference 2012 and AGM

AT POPLARS NURSERY
TODDINGTON

Saturday, 9 June 2012

Registration: 9.15 am

AGM: 9.30 am

Conference: 10.15 am to 4 pm

The 2012 BLHA Conference will be held on Saturday, 9 June 2012 at the Learning Zone at Poplars Nursery, Toddington, hosted by the **Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society**. Registration will commence at 9.15 am followed by the AGM of the Association at 9.30 am. The Conference will commence at 10.15 am. No charge will be made for those who only wish to attend the AGM. The Conference will finish at 4 pm. Lunch and refreshments are included in the Conference fee.

Talks by local historians will be: 'Fires in Stately Homes and their Outcomes', 'Lost Houses in Bedfordshire' and 'An Introduction to Chalgrave Church' followed by a visit to the church before lunch.

Talks after lunch: 'The Lost Hamlet of Wadelow', 'Art Deco Buildings in Luton', 'Valuation Maps and Centenary Appeal' followed by a Summary and a Tribute to Bedfordshire History by the President.

Cost for the day including drinks and lunch: £17; dedicated parking, details on your ticket. Closing date for applications, Friday, 4 May 2012. Send applications to Mike Turner, 117 High Street, Clophill, Beds MK45 4BJ, Tel 01525 862285.

Notes and news

The grave of the founder of Battersea Dogs Home. Mary Tealby's grave in St Andrew's churchyard, Biggleswade, has been restored. Work began on 14 November 2011, on the restoration of the gravestone of Mary Tealby (1801–1865) who, in 1860,

founded The Temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs in Holloway, London.

After Mary's death the Home moved to its current location in Battersea in 1871 and became Battersea Dogs Home. Although it had taken in cats since 1883, it was not renamed Battersea Dogs and Cats Home until 2002. Queen Victoria became its patron in 1884 and the patron today is Her Majesty the Queen. Mary Tealby, who had parted from her husband, a timber merchant in Hull, arrived in London in 1860. She died from cancer five years later whilst staying with relatives at The Elms, London Road, Biggleswade, and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard. Her brother, the Reverend Edward Bates, who helped Mary in her work, was buried in the same plot in 1876. The restoration work, which involved replacing worn sections of stone, including some of the lettering, was carried out for Battersea Dogs and Cats Home by Cliveden Conservation of Maidenhead and was expected to cost about £2,400. Biggleswade resident, Des Ball, has taken a special interest in the town's link with this world famous institution since 1960, the Home's centenary, when representatives from Battersea first came to Biggleswade to locate the their founder's grave. Des suggested the project to preserve Mary's memorial for posterity and he offered to collect donations from Biggleswade and forward them to the Home as a contribution from the town towards the cost of the work. The History Society's Committee contributed £250. [Courtesy of Biggleswade History Society's *Newsletter*.]

New book. Richard Morgan, an HIB contributor, has just published *Life Runneth as The Brooks: The Brooks Family in Bedfordshire*, which tells the story of the Brooks – gentry at the heart of Bedfordshire and Flitwick village life from the mid-18th century to 1934. Diaries, letters, sketches and photos have allowed their life to be fully reconstructed.

It is published in a numbered and strictly limited edition of 150 copies, quarto format, and 259 printed pages, with illustrations, case-bound with dust jacket. ISBN: 978-1904289-71-5, price £60, plus postage at cost. Publishers: Pagoda Tree Press, 4 Malvern Buildings, Fairfield Park, Bath BA1 6JX. Tel/Fax: 01225 463552. E-mail:

sales@pagodatreepress.com

We hope to review this book in the next issue of HIB.

West Gallery music

Around 20 years ago a handful of people with an interest in music and history began researching West Gallery music, the church and social music of English rural communities between about 1700 and 1850. In 2003 one of them, Ken Baddley, formed 'Bedford Gallery Quire' which performs about six concerts a year in costume of the early 1800s using mainly period instruments.

What is now known as 'West Gallery' was the first music heard in country churches after there had been little or none during and following the Puritan era. Instrumentalists played in a robust energetic manner and singers sang vigorously with full-throated chest voices the three- and four-part harmonies of the hymns, psalms and anthems.

They were often known only as 'the singers' even though they usually included instrumentalists. Because, in most parish churches, all available pew space was owned or rented, they often sang from a gallery built for the purpose at the West end of the church, and for this reason, when Thomas Hardy later wrote fondly of what was then a dying tradition, he termed them 'West Gallery Singers'. They were mainly local working people who copied out their music by hand into their tune books. Even the composers were often tradesmen, such as cobblers or weavers, though their compositions could propel them to national fame and even royal notice. They would also play for all the village social occasions such as weddings and funerals, dancing and harvest celebrations, and music for all these occasions has been unearthed.

The quire was formed in Bedfordshire because of the wealth of local material. There was a church band and choir at the Three Ridges Chapel (now Bunyan Meeting) in Bedford and much of their manuscript music survives and provided the original repertoire for Bedford Gallery Quire. Music from other parts of the country is also used as are secular pieces such as glees and drinking songs which were sung in gentlemen's clubs called 'Catch Clubs'. The quire's website is bedfordgalleryquire.org.uk LINDA REED

The Bedford to Hitchin Railway

In 1845 the Midland Railway was thinking of further expansion and Leicester–Bedford–Hitchin seemed a good route. The then proposed Direct Northern or London and York would provide access to London via Hitchin. It is said that pressure was put on the Midland Board by landowners at Market Harborough, Kettering and Bedford and that W H Whitbread was anxious to have the railway through his estate and offered land at £70 per acre. The railway from Bedford to Hitchin thus was originally part of the main line of the Midland Railway to London and was built to give it access to the capital by running over the Great Northern Railway from Hitchin into the GNR's King's Cross terminus. In 1852 the GNR and Midland reached agreement to accommodate Midland traffic at Hitchin and the

Midland obtained powers to build the line on 4 August 1853. Thomas Brassey began building it in 1855 and the total route was built for £1 million – a low figure for that time – and it opened throughout on 8 May 1857, but at first passengers had to change at Hitchin onto GNR trains and this lasted until 1 February 1858 when Midland trains were allowed to run into King's Cross.

There were problems in building the railway because of the Greensand Ridge near Shefford, so it had to go through a tunnel at Old Warden and also through a cutting to the north of Shefford. From this cutting it made a wide sweep to the north coming into Shefford and ran across the valley floor on an embankment which reached its widest part in the goods yard just south of Amptill Road. The tunnel at Old Warden which is half a mile long and approached through a mile-long cutting was therefore not the only difficulty. At this point the railway was single track.

The line did well from its opening, and it became clear in 1862 that the Midland must have its own direct route to London and, when this line opened in 1868, the Bedford–Hitchin line became a secondary cross-country route, though some expresses still ran to King's Cross until St Pancras station was completely ready. The original double track from Bedford was singled in 1912 and the service was provided by steam 'rail-motor' trains until diesel units were provided in 1960.



19th century 2–4–0 Midland engine designed by Matthew Kirtley

Intermediate stations on the Bedford–Hitchin line were at Cardington, Southill, Shefford and Henlow (renamed Henlow Camp from 1 March 1933). These conformed to a standard design with low platforms and small buildings of yellow brick with lattice windows in cast-iron frames. Shefford never had good station buildings: the platforms were of timber and so was the booking hall until one of brick with a parcels office was built in the station yard. All had full passenger facilities except Henlow Camp, which had no accommodation for furniture vans, livestock, horse-boxes or carriages by passenger train. Only Shefford and the separate Hitchin Midland goods station had cranes, both of 1 ton 10 cwt capacity.

Passenger services were a basic four trains each way (six in 1910) on weekdays, with extras on Tuesdays; by 1938 there were also three trains each way on Sundays, and weekday extras to the basic four-train pattern ran on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

What the railway lacked for its survival was industry. The only real industries in the area were the gas works and scrap yard at Shefford, and a quarry at Henlow where special sidings were constructed. Near Shefford Station were the cattle and goods yards with associated sidings. Traffic figures for the Shefford Railway in 1952 show 40 passengers per day from Shefford, 112 from Henlow Camp and 168 from Cardington. The Bedford–Hitchin Railway closed completely on 1 January 1962 – just over 50 years ago this year.

TED MARTIN

References

F G Cockman, *The Railway Age in Bedfordshire* (Dunstable: The Book Castle, 1994).
Internet.

A panacea in Bedford

Two Victorian villas in Albany Road, Bedford, separated by just three front doors, are ready for great events: one is waiting for the Second Coming, and the other for the return of the female Messiah, Octavia. The villas belong to the Panacea Society, a religious group based in Bedford, founded by Mabel Barltrop, at 12 Albany Road. In 1918 she was the 53-year-old widow of a vicar. Their headquarters is 'The Haven', a Victorian mansion near what is left of Bedford Castle and the end-terrace house in Albany Road (called 'The Ark') is a residence for The Messiah after the Second Coming.

The teachings of the Devonshire prophetess Joanna Southcott (1750–1814)¹ inspired the group and Mabel Barltrop, believing she was Southcott's child and the Shiloh of Southcott's prophecies, took the name Octavia. The Society (then known as the Community of the Holy Ghost) began with 12 apostles.

Their main aim was to persuade 24 Anglican bishops to open Southcott's Box of Sealed Writings and advertisements were placed in national newspapers from time to time. They claim that the box is hidden in England, but others say it was opened in 1927 and found to contain, among other things, a broken horse pistol and a lottery ticket.²

In the 1930s there were said to be 70 members in the Bedford community and, in 1967, the *Bedfordshire Times* reported about 30 members. But there is a worldwide membership and the group maintains a healing ministry which started in 1923 and was made publicly available in 1924.

At Mabel's death, in 1934, there were 2,000 members, many living in and around Albany Road. Their homes backed on to a communal area, which they believed to be the original site of the Garden of Eden. Water and linen squares that Barltrop had breathed on, which were posted to them, were believed by 75,000 worldwide followers to contain miraculous healing powers.

A new book, *Octavia, Daughter of God*, by Jane Shaw³ tells the Society's story. Like many others, it grew quickly for a short time but the death and non-return of its Messiah led to its decline. There are still

some surviving Panaceans hoping for Octavia's return, with God, her father.

Mabel Barltrop would give her flock 'the daily script' every evening prescribing the divine and ordinary revelations from her 'father', which she had written down, and other rules, from herself, on how life should be lived in the neighbouring properties. She was in command and was petty and snobbish.

Was Mabel Barltrop a fraudster or deluded? Jane Shaw feels that she was convinced by her own 'visitation' from God, as were her disciples. But Mabel did spend time in asylums following her husband's premature death and was diagnosed with melancholia. She felt that she was responsible for all the world's suffering and making up for that resulted in her spiritual and real journey in the three years between discharge from asylums and becoming Octavia, the female Messiah.

Mabel's links with the Southcottians, were essential. Southcott, a Devon farmer's daughter, during her lifetime attracted a large following in London but lost credibility when aged 64, in 1814, she announced she was pregnant with Shiloh, the new Messiah foretold in Genesis, but then died without giving birth. A few of Southcott's followers continued to believe, circulating her writings – arguing that Shiloh would come only when the world was in crisis. The First World War was such a time, and interest in Southcott's prophecies revived. Messiahs come at difficult times and, with the slaughter in the trenches, Mabel convinced herself that she could save the world.

Many Southcottians, war widows and suffragettes supported Mabel. For the suffragettes a female Messiah was very useful as she could be used to discredit the male establishment of the Church. A small number of men were in the Society, but the hierarchy was completely female.

It is now a small but wealthy Society, owning land and properties in London, Bedford and other places. It was reported to the Charity Commission in 2004 that net assets were around £20m. In 2002 they were ordered by the Charity Commission to auction many of their assets or risk losing tax benefits as a charity.⁴

Notes

1. Joanna Southcott, 1750-1814, was an English religious visionary. Uneducated, possibly illiterate, she spent her early years in domestic service. About 1792 she claimed the gift of prophecy and her 'revelations' attracted many followers. Later she announced that, as the woman in Revelation 12, she would be the mother of the coming Messiah. Soon after the time set for the birth of the 'second Shiloh', she died of brain disease, aged 64. Her followers continued to study the 60 or more tracts and books she had written and the sect never completely died out. She left a locked box instructing that it be opened only in the presence of all the bishops at a time of national crisis (see note 2, below).

2. The opening of the box took place before a large audience at the Hoare Memorial Hall, Church House, Westminster, London, on 11 July 1927. Only the Bishop of Grantham was there, but the Bishop of Crediton was represented by his son, the Reverend Trefusis. Among the 56 objects in the box, the pamphlets and books included: *The Surprises of Love, Exemplified in the Romance of a Day* . . . (1765), with annotations; *Rider's British Merlin* (1715); *Calendrier de la Cour* (1773); and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1794). There was a paper souvenir 'printed on the River Thames, Feb. 3rd, 1814', and a lottery ticket for 1796. Among the objects were a fob purse (containing silver and copper coins and tokens), a horse pistol, a miniature case, an ivory dice cup, a bone puzzle, a woman's embroidered nightcap, and a set of brass money weights. The

Southcottians did not accept that these 'pathetic souvenirs' were the contents of the right box, and the appeals to bishops to attend the opening of the true box continued, although it was not clear where the box was. The story of Joanna Southcott and her prophecies has continued over two centuries and is still not completely dead. Southcott published 65 books and pamphlets, and her followers added many additional items.

3. *Octavia, Daughter of God: The Story of a Female Messiah and her Followers*, by Jane Shaw (Jonathan Cape, 2011): 398pp, £18.99.

4. With acknowledgements to newspapers and TV on the publication of Jane Shaw's book and the internet for background material.

TED MARTIN

Review

Colmworth and Neighbours History. Issue 1, November 2011 (Special Edition in colour) £5 + p&p £1.60 from the secretary on cnhssecretary@gmail.com or Bramble Cottage, Chapel Lane, Colmworth, Bedfordshire MK44 2JY (www.colmworthhistory.org.uk).

To celebrate its 10th birthday Colmworth and Neighbours History Society bravely decided to publish a local history journal. The first issue contains papers covering short examples of oral history in Colmworth and Keysoe, an extended chase for family history and an in-depth look at what can be learned about agricultural practices based on the 1901 Census for North Bedfordshire. An interesting addition is the section on 'Places mentioned in this issue': place names mentioned in the papers include 45 in north Bedfordshire and eight in south Huntingdonshire – an incentive to buy if your parish is mentioned.

Colmworth state that: 'Rural communities are special places with special histories' and they hope that we will enjoy this first flavour', which this reviewer did.

After an introductory preface by Stephen Smith, Chairman of the Colmworth Society, the first paper by Janice Susan Smith is 'Coppingford to Colmworth – a personal journey full of strange coincidences and a royal twist!' (12 pp). Janice describes in a well-written article a day's drive into Huntingdonshire to relate the faces and buildings found in a box of family photographs to the villages in which the family lived worked and died. I have a keen interest in researching family history and found this article absorbing. It is also profusely illustrated, no less than 24 illustrations, many in colour, but Figure 24 has lost its number in the caption. I'll leave the 'royal twist' for the reader to find.

Another 14 pages is taken up by 'Land labour and parish well-being in rural north Bedfordshire – what can be learned from the 1901 Census?' by John Hutchings. This is a detailed, traditional academic paper which attempts to establish patterns of work and industry in the mixed agricultural area of North Bedfordshire by using the 1901 census and *Kelly's Directories*. It concludes that employment patterns in farming can be summarised and that the general tendencies for depopulated parishes are that they are highland villages on clay or heavy clay topsoil with absentee principal landowners, no JPs, no lord of the manor and a high number of farmworkers as a percentage of total labourers. But the populated parishes tend to be river villages with gravel or gravel/clay topsoils, principal landowners present or absent, JPs in the parish, absent lords of the manor and a higher number of labourers in non-farming industries. There are five tables, four graphs, one map and an appendix listing market gardening in North Beds, plus a list of sources.

More colourful history is covered in the five pages devoted to 'The Burgoyne Family of Sutton, Bedfordshire' by Christopher H Walker. He charts their history from Thomas Burgoyne who died in 1516 to the death of Lady

Burgoyne, the widow of the last baronet, in 1938. Amongst their number was General John Burgoyne who surrendered to the Americans after the Battle of Saratoga in 1777 and his illegitimate son, Field Marshal Sir John Fox Burgoyne, who was effectively second in command of the British forces in the Crimea at the age of 72! This article is well illustrated with eight plates, mostly in colour, and gives an insight into the history of a minor landowning family contributing to national and international events.

'Andrew Trapp of Moscow, Bedford, Bushmead and Thurlleigh' by Sue Jarrett relates the unusual and sad story of this third son of a Moscow merchant, from a Thurlleigh family, who was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery and killed on 23 April 1918 near Arras. There are three illustrations and the article occupies four pages.

Issue 1 concludes with two amusing anecdotes of one page each. Alan Woodward in 'Progress – a Keysoe family story' tells of the different methods of transport used over the years by the doctor attending his grandmother's confinements and his grandfather's unchanging bike ride. 'The belching boiler of Colmworth' by Thelma Marks records a wintry and possibly asphyxiating introduction to St Denys Church.

To produce a publication of this scope and quality must have been a major decision for a single Society. The production values are good and their printer has done a very professional job. The layout might have been less generous and thus saved some cost but it was good to see Palatino typeface rather than Times New Roman used. The essence of good typography is simplicity and I would offer the following suggestions: I would not use the same style (bold italics) for the article headings as for the in-text headings, even though they are in different sizes, as this could be confusing – see the tops of pp 4 and 5, where the in-text heading on page 5 is in the wrong size and looks like the start of a new article. The article headings would probably look well in a 16pt or 18pt medium (i.e., roman type) upper and lowercase. The use of bold type should be minimised and the pernicious new fashion of italicising block quotations (pp 7, 10, and 11) should not be followed, because it neutralises the well-known convention of using italic for emphasis within a quotation and impacts on other styles such as using italic for book titles. In the quotation at the top of page 7, the emphasis was put in medium type, which I at first thought to be a mistake in that the italic had ended too soon! It is much better to set out quotations in smaller medium (i.e., roman) type which could be indented on one side or both sides, or not as preferred: it looks neater and causes less confusion. Proofreading seemed to be careful and I discovered only three minor errors.

But all this apart, Colmworth are to be congratulated on their initiative which we must hope will grow and be supported by other Societies in the County and, who knows, we might one day have a replacement for the late lamented *Bedfordshire Magazine*!

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