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## In this issue

**Notes and News:** 2011 BLHA Conference; BBC Hands on History; *Breaking New Ground: Nineteenth Century Allotments* (new book)

**Bridge to Bedford** BRYAN ELLIS

**Stayesmore Manor, Carlton: Part 1** MIKE PRATT

**Book Review:** *The Man who Ran London during the Great War*

## Notes and news

Next year's **BLHA conference on 11 June 2011** will be hosted by Willington Local History Group. The theme for the day will be 'Willington from Gostwick to Godber' and it will provide an opportunity through talks and a tour to find out more about Willington, its buildings and its history. You will hear about several prominent former residents: Sir John Gostwick, who rose to prominence in the court of Henry VIII; Augustus Orlebar, vicar of Willington for over 50 years and a source of inspiration for scenes in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*; and Isaac Godber, who set up a well-known nursery business at the start of the twentieth century. There will be a chance to explore the Tudor dovecote and stables and the church with members of the local history group. The day will also provide an opportunity to learn more about the work of the Willington group and be a time to share ideas between the groups attending. Look out for further information in the next issue of this Newsletter.

**BBC Hands On History.** History will be a major priority for the BBC over the next two years, with an unprecedented range of programmes across BBC 1, 2 and 4 from the Norman Conquest and Stonehenge to 100 years of the British High Street and the story of England told through 2,000 years in one village to stimulate interest and engagement in history across the UK.

BBC Learning is also launching the *Hands on History* campaign to work closely with partners in the heritage and community sectors to inspire thousands of families to explore history over the next two years.

Phase 1 of Hands on History launched in July 2010 explored the Norman era. Phase 2 runs in Autumn 2010 supporting a major BBC 1 TV series on the history of the British High Street. Families will run shops in a typical high street taken 'back in time'

and record their experiences as the shops change and develop through history.

There is a 'Things to do' database commissioned for Learning Campaigns working across genres and launched in time for the High Street phase. Working with the Regional BBC Learning, community groups, museums and local history societies will be invited to upload details of High-Street related exhibitions, events and workshops for audiences to find on the database, searchable by postcode and keywords.

**Breaking New Ground:** The Family & Community Historical Research Society Ltd, carries out joint research projects that relate to families and the community. It has published *Breaking New Ground: Nineteenth Century Allotments from Local Sources\** which offers important new evidence on the history of 19th century allotments, showing how deeply embedded they were in rural society. Based on a nationwide research project, *Breaking New Ground* reveals that allotments were numerous and widespread, cherished not only by agricultural labourers, but also by tradesmen, artisans and industrial workers. They did not just alleviate poverty, but were a major institution of Victorian village life.

The 15 chapters include detailed local studies of how allotments developed all over England: East Anglia, the West Country, southern England, the Midlands and elsewhere. Little explored aspects of allotment history are considered: the moral dimension of allotment rules, allotments and riots, paternalistic employers and the people's desire for allotments to replace lost rights of common.

\* Edited by Jeremy Burchardt and Jacqueline Cooper (ISBN: 978-0-9548180-1-2. Price £12 + £4 p & p (UK), includes a complementary CD containing a comprehensive database of over 3,000 allotment sites and nearly 1,000 allotment tenants, which will be of particular interest to local and family historians. Available from FACHRS Publications, Pilcot House, Pilcot, Dogmersfield, Hook, Hants RG27 8SY or online shop at [www.shop.fachrs.org.uk](http://www.shop.fachrs.org.uk).

## Bridge to Bedford

In the summer of 1940 an appeal went out for families with spare accommodation to make it available to people exposed to bombing in London and other big cities. Among those who answered the call were Alice (known as 'Bill') and Charles Bransom of Putnoe Lane, Bedford. Accordingly in October they found on their doorstep my grandparents, whose home in Willesden Green had had several near misses, with their daughter, my unmarried aunt.

A rather stilted conversation followed until somebody said: 'You don't play bridge, by any chance, do you?' The answer was 'Yes', and that's what they did almost every evening for the next five years.

In 1944 London was under aerial attack again from V1 missiles or 'flying bombs'. My cousin and I spent the long summer school holiday in the safety of Bedford. He was 13 and I was 10. We were allowed to stay up and watch the bridge, provided we did this quietly and made sure that any questions were sensible ones. By the end of six weeks we were both bridge players and have remained addicted to the game for the past 66 years.

My grandparents returned to London in 1945. My aunt remained for another year. She had joined the Bedfordshire Red Cross and their quiet war was overturned early in 1942 when the local regiment was captured at Singapore and marched off to Japanese prison camps. The Red Cross became the focus for maintaining communication with the troops and getting food parcels through to them. They were sufficiently successful for my aunt and several colleagues to be invited to a Buckingham Palace reception as a thank-you for their work.

That is the end of the story except that our family's friendship with the Bransoms was maintained by my grandparents and succeeding generations for the rest of their long lives. From Putnoe Lane the Bransoms moved to a new bungalow at Ravensden, but that did not work out and they returned to a flat, and ultimately to a care home in Bedford town centre. For all their days they remained a fruitful source of stories about their young days in the town. 'Bill' Bransom's claim to fame was that she was the first Bedford woman to drive a motor-car. Charles remembered how he was able to stay up one night when he was six to hear all the factory sirens go off at midnight to welcome the twentieth century. He lived to be 97 and so, sadly, was not there to lament that all the sirens had gone by the year 2000.

BRYAN ELLIS

## Stayesmore Manor, Carlton Part 1

The earlier history of Stayesmore Manor in Carlton is obscure, and this article is mainly concerned with the period from about 1700 onwards. The Domesday Book (1086) does not mention any manors at all in Carlton, though there was one in Chellington, which at that time was a separate village. However, manors were not static entities – they could grow in extent, by acquisition of neighbouring land, and conversely they could shrink. New manors could be created, and old ones could disappear through absorption into larger manors. A valuable snapshot of the Carlton situation in 1694 is given by a document held at the Beds and Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS) [Ref X112/2]. It originated from the Bedford Assizes held in July of that year, and it states that (a) Harrold

bridge was in disrepair, and (b) the lords of several local manors shared the responsibility for repairing it. These people were named as:

**Henry Mordaunt, 2nd Earl of Peterborough**, by reason of his manors of Stagsden, Turvey and Chellington;

**Edward Reynolds**, by reason of his manor of Carlton; and

**Charles Cutts**, by reason of his manor of Stayesmore.

This indicates clearly that in 1694 the manors of Carlton, Chellington and Stayesmore were separate estates. It also shows, contrary to the opinion expressed in the *Victoria County History of Bedfordshire* (VCHB), that Stayesmore Manor and Carlton Manor (also known as Carlton Hall Manor) were not merely different names for the same manor. The confusion apparently arose because these two adjacent manors were in the same ownership for long periods.

Stayesmore Manor is thought to derive its name from a **William Stayesmore** (alternatively spelled **Staismore** or **Staresmore**) who held it at one time. According to the VCHB he died in 1529, having held manors in both Hockliffe and Carlton during his lifetime.

Some time before 1650, both Carlton Hall and Stayesmore manors seem to have been held by a family named **Reynolds**. **Edward Reynolds** was Bishop of Norwich, and his son **Edward Reynolds, Jr**, was Archdeacon of Northampton. These people probably never actually lived in Carlton; the focus of their families seems to have been in Leicestershire and Warwickshire. Eventually the manor was passed down to **Francis Reynolds**, probably a son of one of the Edwards Reynolds. He ran into financial problems, and took out a heavy mortgage on the property, but then died intestate. The manor thus came into the possession of **Charles Cutts**, the mortgagee, who is mentioned in the list above as the owner of Stayesmore Manor in 1694. He sold it to **Uriah Bithray** (a native of Carlton), who died in 1747, leaving the property to his son **Thomas Bithray**, from whom it had passed by 1764 to his nephews **Charles** and **William Bithray**. William Bithray, in turn, sold the manor to **Thomas Palmer** of Olney some time between 1765 and 1769.

The Bithrays or Bithreys were a long-established family in Carlton, worthy of further study, and the Palmers of Olney owned substantial property in the Carlton area for many years.

### The Battams era

At some time during the 1770s, then, Stayesmore Manor was in the possession of Thomas Palmer of Olney. He left it to his nephew and namesake **Thomas Palmer**, originally of Bourton, Gloucestershire, who had however emigrated to Pennsylvania in what was to become the United States of America, and was making a living as a merchant in Philadelphia. During the last two decades of the 18th century, the younger Thomas Palmer sold Stayesmore Manor to **Thomas Battams**, Gentleman, of Turvey. Thomas put his son **Robert**, formerly a

grazier from Clifton Reynes, in occupation of the property. Its new owner made a significant purchase of additional land in 1803, when he acquired about 100 acres in Carlton and Chellington and more than another 150 acres in Haynes, Wilshampstead and Olney, from **John Costin** of Bedford.



Stayesmore Manor today

In his will, Thomas Battams initially left Stayesmore Manor to his son **Robert** in trust, but he later added a codicil leaving it to him absolutely. Thus in 1818, after Thomas's death, Robert became the new owner. His father's will had also stipulated that upon Robert's death the property was to be sold to support Robert's children by his deceased wife, who had died in 1816. The will specifically mentions a 'new built farmhouse' in Carlton, in occupation of his son Robert. This is the present Stayesmore Manor house, at the junction between Carlton High Street and the Turvey Road. It is believed to have been built in about 1805, and the VCHB suggests that it replaced an earlier manor house standing on or near the same site.

We can learn more about Robert Battams from memorials in Carlton churchyard. His wife's name was **Charlotte**, and she died in 1816 at the age of 39. By that time she had borne eight or more children, some of whom were christened at St Mary's, Carlton, and at least one of whom died in infancy. Robert himself died in 1822, aged only 42.

Robert left a will directing that (in accordance with his father's wishes) all his real estate in Carlton should be sold, and that all the money raised should be invested in securities to pay for the education of his seven surviving children by Charlotte. These were listed as **Robert, Jr, Thomas, John, Rose, Charlotte, Susanna** and **Harriett**. Robert, Jr, the oldest, was 18 or 19 when his father died, and Harriet, the youngest, about 6.

The sale of the property, by the executors of Robert Battam's will, seems to have been a rather complicated process. It appears that Stayesmore Manor was briefly in the possession of Robert's brother, Thomas, but in 1831 the Battams family finally relinquished it, and it passed into the possession of Thomas, Lord Grantham (1781–1859), better known after 1833 as Thomas Philip de Grey, 2nd Earl de Grey, who later inherited the Wrest Park estate in Silsoe. At that time he was also the owner of the manor of Carlton Hall, and the two manors were once again united under the same ownership, as they had been around 150 years earlier, when they were

both in the possession of Edward Reynolds.

After Robert Battams's death and the sale of Stayesmore Manor, it was not long before there were Battams in residence there again, though from now on as tenants rather than owners. **George Battams** occupied the house, with his wife **Anna Maria**. Both of them were born in Northamptonshire, he in Irchester and she in Wellingborough. George was a brother of the former owner Robert Battams. George and Anna Maria had nine children, all of them christened in Carlton over the period 1826–1840. In order of birth, they were **George Bland, John Tuck, Anna Maria, Henry, Sarah Bland, Thomas, Robert, William Bland** and **Mary**. 'Bland' and 'Tuck', here used as second forenames, were doubtless ancestral surnames – I believe that Bland was the maiden name of the wife of Thomas Battams of Turvey mentioned earlier.

There is a large memorial in Carlton churchyard, commemorating George Battams, who died in 1886 aged 84, and Anna Maria his wife, who died the following year aged 86. The same memorial also mentions two of their sons, John Tuck Battams and Henry Battams, who both died in their twenties, apparently unmarried, in the same year, 1855. Prior to that time the two of them had been managing more than 400 acres of farmland at Snelson, Lavendon, Bucks, on the other side of the river Great Ouse, on behalf of their father. Following their death, George Battams put his fifth son Robert in charge at Snelson, but there seems to have been another tragedy in 1861. Robert was married the previous year, and he appears in the 1861 census with his wife Elizabeth, but she died very shortly afterwards in the same year, aged only 23. Robert continued to farm at Snelson for many years, but never remarried. He died in 1902, aged 67, and is buried in Carlton churchyard, next to his wife, who is mentioned on the inscription on her memorial as 'Lillie, the beloved wife of Robert Battams of Snelson'.

Of the other sons, George Bland Battams, the eldest, was found later in the century in Tavistock, Devon, describing himself as a 'Gentleman Farmer' of more than 500 acres. Thomas Battams went to Lidlington, where he farmed 975 acres. It was the youngest son, William Bland Battams, who succeeded his father at Stayesmore Manor – more of him later.

Of the daughters, Anna Maria Battams, Jr, married **Charles Whitworth** in 1849. Charles was born in Kempston, but by 1881 he was farming 900 acres, employing 20 men and 9 boys and living with his wife and family at the Old Mill, Newton Blossomville. Sarah Bland Battams married **William Cole Daniell** of Newport Pagnell in 1859. He was a surgeon, and they lived at Calverton, Bucks, but they do not seem to have had any children. Her husband predeceased her, and Sarah herself is buried in Carlton churchyard. The youngest daughter Mary also seems to have married, but I have not so far found the details.

After his father's death in 1886, William Bland Battams became the principal tenant at Stayesmore Manor. Earlier he had farmed at Mansion Farm in Harrold, his holding there being 716 acres in 1871

and 1,100 acres in 1881. He had married **Maria Gertrude Small** of Bedford in 1860; the wedding took place in Carlton. This couple had seven children: **Edith Mary** (born about 1861), **Reginald William** (1862), **Ethel** (1864), **Mary** (1866), **Edgar Bland** (1868), who died shortly after birth, **Gertrude** (1870) and **George Robert** (1873). William Bland Battams died in 1918, aged 82, and his wife in 1922, aged 80. They are buried together in Carlton churchyard.

Of the surviving sons, Reginald William never married. He lived with his parents at Stayesmore Manor. At one time he was employed as a 'Rate Collector', but later he assisted his father in running the farm. He died in 1925, aged 63, and is buried in Carlton churchyard. His brother, George Robert, seems to have been similarly disinclined to marry. In 1901 he was a solicitor's clerk in Dorchester, and by 1911, at the age of 37, he was qualified as a solicitor and practising in Wellingborough, but still single. I have found no indication that he subsequently ever married.

Regarding the daughters, Edith was living in Egham, Surrey, in 1891, employed as a 'Mental Nurse'. She was still unmarried in 1901, aged 40, and at that time she was running a boarding house in Bristol. I have been unable to find a death record for her under the surname Battams – she possibly married late in life, but is unlikely to have had any children. The second daughter, Ethel, never married, and died in 1934 aged about 70. In 1903 her sister Mary married a medical practitioner, **Percy Robert Gostling**. In the 1911 census they were found living in Bures, Suffolk; by this time Mary was 44 and had no children after 7 years of marriage. Gertrude Battams was still living with her parents, in 1911, unmarried and aged 40.

Thus there seem to have been no descendants of the children of William Bland Battams and his wife Maria Gertrude, despite the fact that six of them survived to adulthood. The Battams occupancy of Stayesmore Manor had endured for more than 120 years, but it terminated with the death of Reginald William Battams in 1925. The major Battams legacy to Carlton is the present Stayesmore Manor house, built in the early 19th century; otherwise, their former presence is recorded only by the row of Battams gravestones along the eastern boundary of the churchyard, several of them now falling into disrepair.

MIKE PRATT

*(To be continued)*

## Book review

*The Man who Ran London during the Great War: The Diaries and Letters of Lieutenant General Sir Francis Lloyd, GCMG, KCB, DSO, 1853–1926*, by Richard Morris. Pen and Sword Military, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS. ISBN 978-1-84884-164-2, 208pp + 16pp plates, hardback, £19.99.

This is Richard Morris's second book featuring a military hero and the books are connected, for General Sir Francis Lloyd was the great grandson of Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey

commander of the *Temeraire* at Trafalgar whose story was told in *Merchants, Medicine and Trafalgar* (published in 2007). The parallels do not end there, for both men took part in the major engagements of their time and then no further military action thereafter; but while the Admiral spent the rest of his life without another command for insulting a senior officer, General Lloyd's talents were put to work in administration.

Francis Lloyd was also descended from an ancient North Welsh family with a military background and lands and a county seat, Aston Hall in Shropshire. He joined the Army in 1874 at age 21 and served for 44 years mostly in the Grenadier Guards. His first taste of action was in the Sudan in 1885 when he was Mentioned in Dispatches after the battle of Hashin. In 1898 he was back in the Sudan and at the Battle of Omdurman. Then in 1899 the Boer War began and Lieutenant-Colonel Lloyd was in command of the 2nd battalion Grenadier Guards and was wounded at Senekal but went back into action after recovering from his wounds.

He had a long and successful marriage, albeit with many enforced separations, to Mary Gunnis of Leckie, Stirlingshire, but there were no children.

After the war he returned to England and pursued his army career until on 3 September 1913 he was appointed to command the London District, but, in less than a year, the First World War had begun and Lloyd was involved at the top level in administering the defence of London and had wide powers concerning hospitals and railway termini and constructing defensive trenches round London. He visited areas bombed by Zeppelins and Gothas. General Lloyd was also a good speaker and noted for his immaculate dress. He was always in demand to speak to boost civilian morale and assist in recruitment.

In 1915 King George V commanded that a Welsh regiment of footguards should be formed and Lord Kitchener gave the job to Francis Lloyd who selected Welsh volunteers from other regiments to be the core of the new Welsh Guards.

His duties were multifarious but he was unflagging in their performance, although he must have been disappointed that he did not get a field command during the War.

After the War he became Food Commissioner, retired from the Army and became a member of the LCC for a while and was instrumental in saving the Welsh Guards from abolition. While serving in London he lived at his great-grandfather's house, Rolls Park at Chigwell, where he entertained Winston Churchill at election times. He died at Rolls Park on 26 February 1926.

Richard Morris has written a very good and absorbing account of the life of this soldier/administrator, quoting extensively from his letters and diaries and contemporary sources. There is also family history and much on the two great houses owned by Lloyd: Aston Hall and Rolls Park. The book is well produced and has 16 pages of monochrome plates and a good index which, unfortunately, is set in a very small size of type and three columns to a page.

TED MARTIN

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