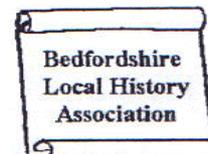


HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE



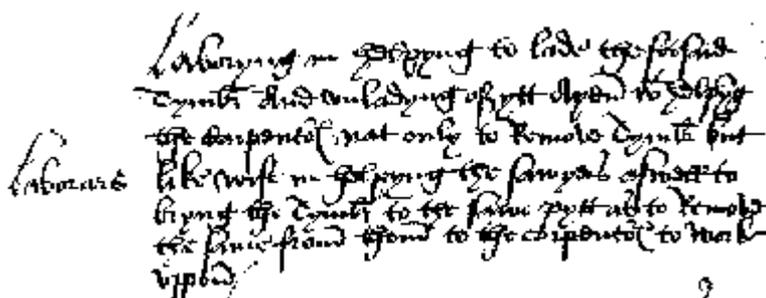
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Spring 2007

Bedfordshire Local History Association Autumn Workshop

Autumn palaeography workshop – are you having problems reading old documents? Are you interested in learning more about how to read and interpret handwriting in historical documents?

BLHA is offering this workshop on Saturday the 6th October 2007 from 9.30 – 1.30 at **Great Barford Village Hall**. Kevin Ward and James Collett-White from Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service will run the workshop. Both are very experienced in reading Latin and English handwriting of all periods.



The workshop will examine three types of document – manor court records, wills, and title deeds – but the handwriting styles examined will be similar to those used in a wide range of other records of similar dating to those used.

Following an introduction to the general principles of how to approach reading old handwriting, those attending will do

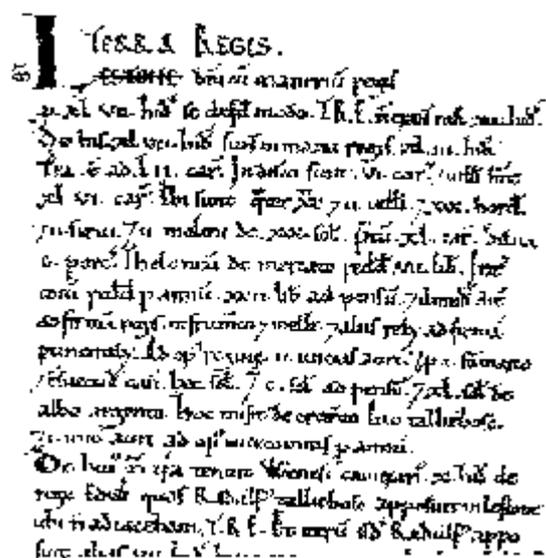
some practical work. They can choose to work by themselves or in pairs in transcribing (copying word by word) from copies of three of the above types of records. In each case Kevin and James will then go through each of the documents with everyone as a group ... so no pressure! You will mark your own efforts!

You are invited to bring along any reading problems you have found with your own research, and provided there is enough time, Kevin and James will look at these with you over the lunchtime period.

If the workshop is popular, BLHA will consider running it again and varying the types of records examined according to demand and interest.

Coffee will be available, and attendees are asked to bring a packed lunch. The cost of the workshop is £8 for members.

Booking forms will be sent to members after the AGM and Conference, and the closing date for bookings will be 30th September 2007.



URGENT APPEAL FOR A WEBMASTER

The BLHA urgently needs a volunteer webmaster to keep its website up to date. If you or anyone you know has the knowledge and is willing to help, please e-mail secretary@bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

SOME GLEANINGS FROM THE CENSUSES FOR CLOPHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE

Colin Watt

Last Christmas, with time on my hands, I decided to use my computer skills to analyse the census returns for Clophill. As I knew how to use Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, I transcribed the available census returns using a sheet for each of the six censuses. By using the formulas and charting options, I was able to draw out some interesting information.

Population

I have plotted, in Figure 1, the total population and the ratio of male to female. There were always more females than males.

The population began to fall after 1871. I thought, at first, that this was probably due to migration to towns and cities, but a look at the age distribution (see Figure 2) shows that for 1891 to 1901, although there is a drop in the 20 to 50 age range, there is a large drop in the 0 to 10 age range, which suggests a drop in the birth rate.

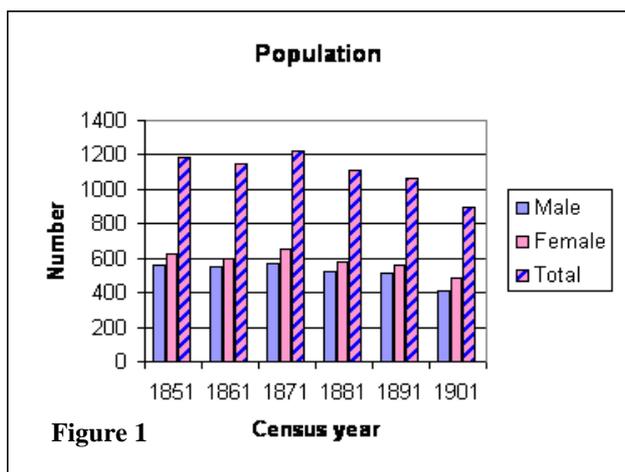


Figure 1

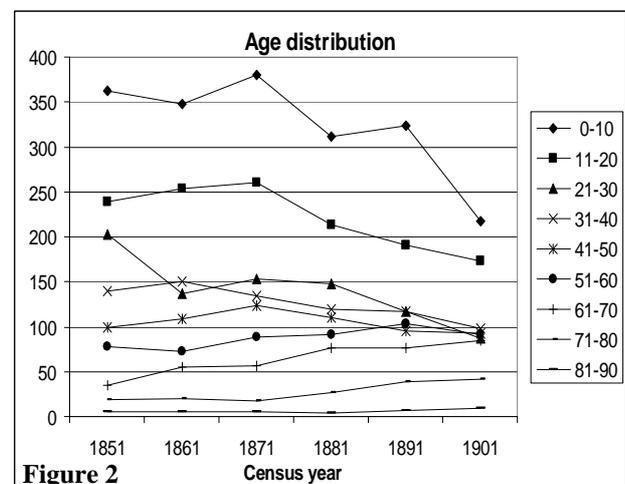


Figure 2

Life Expectancy

Figure 2 also shows the high population in the 0-10 age group, which noticeably reduces in the 11 to 20 age group, showing a high death rate in young children and, to a lesser extent, in the 21 to 30 age group.

Occupations

As there were 182 male and 75 female occupations named in the censuses, I grouped the occupations into five for the males and six for the females. The majority of males (see Figure 3) were *agricultural labourers*, though there was a fall in numbers as the decades progressed, with an increase in *skilled agricultural workers* and *market gardeners*. (There is an anomaly in 1871 where a number of *Ag.Lab.* were classified as *Lab.*)

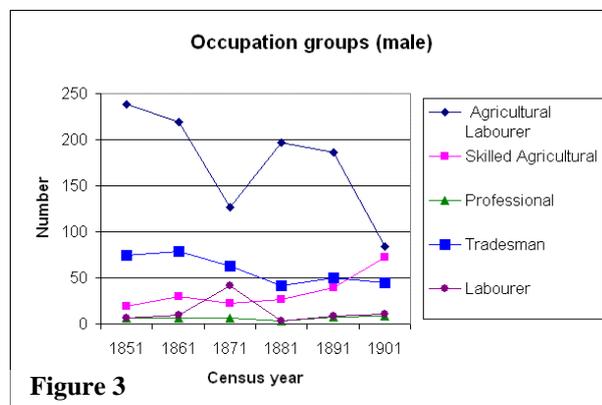


Figure 3

Whilst *Ag.Lab.* was the main occupation of the men, the women mainly worked as *Strawplaiters* (see Figure 4). In Bedfordshire in 1871 there were over 20,000 people employed in the straw plaiting industry, which was centred on Luton (hence the Hatters). By 1901 there were less than 500. This was due to cheap imports from the Far East. This must have had a big effect on Clophill. It is not clear what the women did instead.

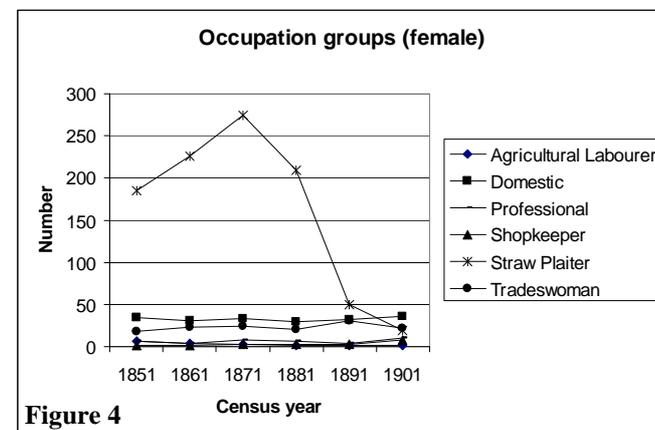


Figure 4

SOME GLEANINGS FROM THE CENSUSES FOR CLOPHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE (Cont.)

Children were also employed plaiting straw. The 1851 census shows that Lucy Ashby, aged 56, "Keeps a School for Platting Straw" in Little Lane. They were known as "sore thumb schools".

Migration

At the end of the 19th century there was a lot of migration to the towns. There was an agricultural depression in the countryside, due mainly to cheap imports from the USA. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the towns and cities had been growing, and much of the reduction in the population of Clophill was probably due to movement to the cities. Here is an example.

The Ashwells

The **1891 Census – Clophill, Bedfordshire** (Table 1) shows that **George Ashwell** was born and probably married in Clifton. He and his wife had their first child there. They were living in Clophill in 1891 and had another child. Also his younger sister was living with them.

The **1901 Census – Kentish Town, St.Pancras, London** (Table 2) reveals that the **Ashwell** family were now living in London. One can deduce from the ages and places of birth of their additional children that they first moved to Gravenhurst, probably about 1893, where they had a further three children, and then, about 1898, to London, where two-year-old daughter **Gladis** and the twins **Ethel** and **Edith** were born.

Daughter **Florence** had probably died and sister **Mary** had also disappeared, maybe married.

George had given up his occupation of Timber Sawyer and was not just a General Labourer.

Searching the census for other occupants in Doynton Street reveals that the head of the household at 56 Doynton Street was **Alfred Dilley**, aged 36, General Labourer, who was born in **Meppershall**. His family, wife **Fanny** 31, brother **William** 46 (widower), son **Alfred** 7, and daughter **Florence** 2, were all born in **Meppershall**. His youngest daughter, **Ann** 2, was born in London, **Pancras**. This indicates that they had moved to London about 3 years previously.

Boarding at 55 Doynton Street was **Edward Arnold** who was born in **Shillington**. At 56 Doynton Street were **Alfred Dilley** and his family, all born at **Meppershall** except for his youngest daughter Ann, aged one, who was born in London, indicating a recent migration. Did they know each other in Bedfordshire?

The occupations of their cosmopolitan neighbours were very different from their neighbours back in Bedfordshire, who were mostly agricultural labourers. They included Railway Signaller, Pastry Cook, Piano Forte Fitter Up, Train Conductor, Cabinet Maker and Stone Mason.

To see more

This is only a sample of the analysis that I have carried out on the censuses for Clophill. For more findings visit Clophill History at <http://tinyurl.com/2t8yjt>

House	Name	Relation	Condition	Age (male)	Age (female)	Occupation	Where born
High Street	George Ashwell	Head	Mar	24		Timber Sawyer	Beds – Clifton
	Georgina Ashwell	Wife	Mar		23		Beds – Shillington
	Minnie Ashwell	Daughter			1		Beds – Clifton
	Florence M Ashwell	Daughter			2w		Beds – Clophill
	Mary J Ashwell	Sister			12		Beds - Clifton

Table 1. Transcription from 1891 census for Clophill, Bedfordshire.

House	Name	Relation	Condition	Age (male)	Age (female)	Occupation	Where born
57 Doynton St	George Ashwell	Head	Mar	34		General Labourer	Beds – Clifton
	Georgina Ashwell	Wife	Mar		33		Beds – Shillington
	Minnie Ashwell	Daur	S		11		Beds – Clifton
	Alfred G Ashwell	Son	S	7			Beds – Gravenhurst
	Lillian Ashwell	Daur	S		6		Beds – Gravenhurst
	Mary J Ashwell	Daur	S		4		Beds – Gravenhurst
	Gladis V Ashwell	Daur	S		2		London – Pancras
	Ethel E Ashwell	Daur	S		4 mon		London – Pancras
	Edith M Ashwell	Daur	S		4 mon		London - Pancras

Table 2. Transcription from 1901 census for Kentish Town, St Pancras, London.

The Biggleswade History Society

The original Biggleswade & District History Society was formed in 1974; Biggleswade History Society became a Registered Charity in 1987. The membership currently stands at 109 members, with an age range from 35 to 95. Approximately one-third of the membership attend monthly meetings. In accordance with the Constitution, organisation is by Committee elected at an A.G.M.

Monthly members' meetings are held on the first Tuesday in the month, followed by a Committee meeting generally on the following Monday. During the months of June, July and August, our meetings are held as outdoor visits to places of interest.

Last year we were pleased to be asked to exhibit at the Bedfordshire Steam Fair in the main marquee "Made in Bedfordshire", displaying material on Biggleswade transport manufacturers of yesteryear, illustrating the history of Dan Albone with his Ivel cycles and agricultural tractor, Berkeley cars and caravans, and Maythorns Coachworks.

We publish a monthly newsletter free to our members, and aim to publish a new book every year. Our books are for sale at our local book shop, a couple of garden centres, at our meetings and exhibitions, and through the Society's website.

In addition to the research for the books we publish, some individual members undertake family or local history research projects.

Last Autumn members of the Committee organised a Commemorative Service at St. Andrew's Parish Church to celebrate the life of Dan Albone, who died 100 years ago on 30th October 1906.

If you wish to know more about the Biggleswade History Society or wish to become a member, details can be found on our website: www.biggleswadehistory.org.uk. Alternatively, you may contact Ms. Jean Strange on 01767 315075.

Willington History Group

On August 11th 2005 the decision was taken to form a local history group in Willington, and by 20th September 2005 a constitution had been agreed, and a steering group of 3 members under the Chairmanship of Dorothy Jamieson organised the activities in the inaugural year.

The Group continues under a larger committee under the Chairmanship of Bryan Buckby. In 2006, after the first year of operation, the Group membership had risen to 46 with an age range from 17 to the late 80s, about 75% of the membership attending meetings regularly. The Group holds meetings with speakers about once a month in the Winter, and visits are arranged to places of interest at intervals in the Summer.

We are most proud of our Willington Heritage Project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other donors to produce a village time line, a Heritage Trail leaflet, an interpretation board for the village, a village archive of photographs, audio recordings, and other materials, together with other events and illustrated talks. In addition to the free Heritage Leaflet, we are working on a publication as a tribute to Bernard West, architect, artist and historian, who lived in the village and was one of the group who took the decision to found the Willington History Group. We aim to have it published shortly.

An illustrated booklet of the Village Time Line will be produced to complement the permanent display.

The archive of village photographs now numbers almost 500, dating back as early as the 19th century, providing a very interesting visual record of past village life and its people, and we believe this will prove extremely popular.

If you wish to know more about the Willington History Group or wish to become a member, you may contact Mr. Bryan Buckby on 01234 831012.

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Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to the above address, together with a stamped addressed envelope if the contribution is to be returned. Contributions may be in any readable form, including on IBM compatible disc. If the latter is employed, please consult the Editor before despatch to avoid compatibility problems.

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