BLHA SPRING EXHIBITION: PRE-1918 POSTCARDS

The Committee regrets that they were unable to proceed with the arrangements for the exhibition of pre-1918 postcards originally scheduled for 9th April 2005 at Parkside Hall. It was considered that the number of displays and amount of materials offered was insufficient to create a viable exhibition to fill the sizeable Parkside Hall and would fall short of the standards achieved by the previous successful BLHA exhibitions. The committee wish to thank all those who spent time and effort in responding to their request for contributions on this subject and are considering other ways of exhibiting this interesting material in the future.

AGM & BLHA CONFERENCE 18TH JUNE 2005, HARLINGTON

All members will now have received details of our Annual Conference from Barbara Thurston (01525 874683), this year hosted by Harlington Heritage Trust, at Harlington Parish and Village Halls and of the BLHA AGM from Elisabeth Field (01525 633029). All booking forms and payment should now have been returned to Mrs. Rutherford of Harlington Heritage Trust. The day will commence at 9.00 am with Registration followed by tea and coffee in the Parish Hall. The Conference Events will take place in the in the village hall where the main car park is situated, a very short walk (130 metres) from the parish hall. There is very limited parking (7 places) at the parish hall and this is reserved for use by disabled delegates and for unloading displays.

The AGM will commence promptly at 9.40 am in the Village Hall, BLHA members who wish to attend the AGM but not the Conference are welcome, there will be no charge to attend the AGM.

The Conference will commence at 10.10 am in the Village Hall and a comprehensive programme of talks and guided tours will continue until 4.00 pm with a break for the Buffet Lunch. The day will end with tea and coffee served in the Village Hall.

The programme planned promises an entertaining and interesting day and the delegates will leave with a greater knowledge of this interesting mid-Bedfordshire village and its place in Bedfordshire’s history. Only delegates who have booked a place via Barbara Thurston are entitled to attend the conference.

BLHA AUTUMN WORKSHOP

The BLHA Autumn workshop is planned to take place at Toddington Village Hall on Saturday 5th November 2005, in conjunction with the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Record Service and has been given the provisional title LOOKING AFTER THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES. The aim of the Workshop will be to help Member Societies decide how to care for their local collections of artifacts, photographs, documents etc. We hope to include cataloguing and conservation also archiving and appropriate storage systems for material kept locally, including both paper and computer records. The final programme and other essential details will be available shortly and will appear in our next issue.
HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Spring 2005

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BROOKSES AND DELLS OF FLITWICK MANOR

Richard Morgan

On the 13th April 1828, Thomas William Dell Brooks was born at Flitwick. He was the fourth child and third son of John Thomas Brooks of Flitwick Manor and his wife Mary née Hatfield. The child was baptized in Flitwick Church 8th September 1828. I do not know who his godparents/sponsors were. I am also unable to account for why his baptism was delayed for five months, unless it was to allow a particular sponsor to be present. His first name, Thomas, was likely to have been after his father who, although baptized John Thomas, was apparently always called Thomas (presumably to distinguish him from his half-brother, confusingly called just John).

The origin of the William Dell names is more interesting. The Brookses acquired Flitwick when John Thomas Brooks father George married Anne Hesse (nee Fisher) in 1789. She in turn had acquired Flitwick by inheritance from her godfather Dr. Humphry Dell in 1765. It does not seem that Dr. Dell and the young Anne Fisher as she was then were related. The Dells had been at Flitwick only for two generations from 1735-65 and so far as I know none of the family was called William. However in the north of the county of Bedfordshire during the Civil War was a firebrand called William Dell of Yielden who also owned land and died at Westoning.

There has been speculation that he may have been related to the two Humphry Dells of Flitwick but no link is known. The Revd. J. L. Ward Petley of Flitwick writing in about 1918 in Flitwick: the Story of an Old Beds Village Chichester [nd] pp22-23 describes the elder Humphry Dell as being the son of William Dell of Yielden. This will not do; William Dell died according to Westoning Parish registers in 1669 and the elder Humphry Dell was baptized there in 1678. But it is clear William Dell had a number of children including a second William Dell, who inherited the Westoning property on his mother's death in about 1681. This second William Dell's children were baptized in Westoning 1676/7 to 1684. One of these was the Humphrey whom Petley found. The second Humphrey [sic] Dell of Flitwick was a Londoner born about 1706 son of Humphrey Dell a London Goldsmith. Petley adds the comment "said to be a descendant of William Dell, the Puritan Master of Caius". The London Goldsmith is unknown to Arthur G. Grimwade [London Goldsmiths 1697-1837, London 1935 (reprinted 1976) pp488-9]. But Ambrose Heal in his The London Goldsmiths 1200-1800 London p140 lists him as at the Crown & Pearl Wood Street 1706-14 and Crown & Dolphin, Moor Street 1722 and Boyd's Citizens of London records his wedding in 1703 at St. Peter Cheap to Dorothy Hill. None of this establishes the connection we require but it is credible that the younger William Dell lived at Westoning and that one of his sons, Humphrey, went to London to be apprenticed to and practise as a goldsmith, and that this Humphrey retired to Flitwick, conveniently close to enable him to keep an eye on his Westoning property.

At first sight it might seem odd that a high Tory like J. T. Brooks would call his son after a revolutionary. But I suspect he was attracted more to William Dell's churchmanship than his politics. J. T. Brooks for example on 13th Nov. 1850 attended an Anti-Papist Meeting in Bedford in protest at the "Papal Aggression" when the Catholic Church set up bishoprics in England. As an Evangelical, Brooks might feel more at home with William Dell and the name (even though no one could find the link) would provide a courteous nod in the direction of the benefactor of his (J. T. Brooks') grandmother Anne who was still alive. Perhaps Anne was T. W. D. Brooks' godmother. However all this may have been, Thomas William Dell Brooks was always known as Will, doubtless to distinguish him from his father who as we have seen was also called Thomas (Tom).

One other matter: the sale of Flitwick Manor contents on 16th. Feb. 1954 included in the Library as Lots 30 and 31, described as follows:-

30 English 18th Century School - "A portrait of a young man in a red military jacket with a white silk scarf," 29in. by 24in.
31 English 18th Century School - "A portrait of a young man in an embroidered blue jacket, with a parrot in one hand and cherries in the other, 29in. by 24in."

These pictures whose similarity of dimensions suggest they were painted as a pair, sold for £16 and £20 respectively. Those who saw the pictures thought they were early
eighteenth century - say 1740s. This would fit with the
incumbency of the Dells at Flitwick. Who were they? What
took happened to the pictures?

1. His siblings had to wait between birth and baptism as
follows: Mary Ann 30 days, John Hatfield 66 days, and
George Henry 38 days.

2. A letter from George Brooks to J. T. Brooks of 26
May 1813 in my possession begins "My Dearest Tom".

3. The life of William Dell in the (old) DNB is not to be
relied on as the two William Dells of that period have been
confused. The best account of our William Dell seems to be
John Venn Biographical History of Gonville & Caius College,
Vol. III. Cambridge 1901 pp93-104. A. G. Matthews Calamy
Revised. Oxford 1924 pp 161-2 has a more succinct account.
There is also a useful outline account of other members of the
family in J. Venn Alumni Cantabrigienses Part 1 to 1751 Vol.
II. Cambridge 1922.

4. Venn Alumni Cantabrigienses.

5. MSS at the Society of Genealogists (27319).

6. J. T. Brooks' diary (published as The Diary of a
Bedfordshire Squire, ed. Richard Morgan, Beds Historical

7. The copy of the catalogue which my parents owned
had the prices entered.

MAULDEN MAUSOLEUM

According to Howard Colvin in Architecture and the After life,
Yale 1991, pp 312/313 what were probably the first mausolea
actually to be built in England both date from 1656. One of
them was, significantly, commissioned to be built in
Maulden by a Scottish nobleman who had established himself
at Houghton House, the other by a Devonshire squire. Thomas
Bruce, first Earl of Elgin, was the younger son of a Scottish
Baron, who successively married two English heiresses and
died the owner of a large estate in Bedfordshire. His second
wife, Diana, daughter of William Cecil, 2nd Earl of Essex, died
in 1654 and it was to commemorate her that the mausoleum
was built two years later.
The octagonal sandstone building, containing monuments to
the Earl, his lady and his grandson, was originally connected
to the church by a corridor below which stone steps led down
to a large vaulted crypt. The corridor was removed when the
crypt was enlarged and substantially rebuilt in the 1850s.
The crypt continued to be used for the family's burials until
the mid-Nineteenth century.

The Maulden Mausoleum and its crypt will be open for
public viewing from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm on the following
Sundays:-

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust

A new trust, Bedfordshire Gardens Trust, has been set up to
research and conserve Bedfordshire's historic parks and gardens.
The Trust had its first meeting at Woodbury Hall, Everton on March
25th 2004 and now has a steering group, which has made
considerable progress in getting things up and running.
The trusts' first event was held on October 23rd at The Swiss Garden.
Old Warden and a programme of visits and lectures has been planned
for 2005.

The historic designed landscape, including gardens and parks, is a
great resource for the health and well-being of all. It is under great
threat from both neglect and the pressure of more housing and
development.

Nearly every county in England and Wales has its Gardens Trust to
research and conserve its historic parks and gardens. Education
is very important, both for the public and for the planners. Many trusts
work with schools and institutions to promote appreciation of the
landscape in children.

County Trusts have an umbrella organisation, the Association of
Gardens Trusts which works with English Heritage, The Garden
History Society, Greenspace, CABESpace, NCCPG, Heritage Link
and many other organisations. It lobbies government and is consulted
by them, it comments, through the counties, on planning matters,
provides insurance cover, organises seminars, study days,
conferences and workshops.

It is early days for the Bedfordshire Gardens Trust, but all ready it
has a research co-ordinator, Richard Miller, who will be working
with the County Archives Service to catalogue and research our
historic sites. Bedfordshire Gardens Trust welcomes any one who
is interested in researching landscape, whether they are
experienced or not, to join their group and help in this fascinating
work.

Contact:
Acting Secretary:
Sian Hughes
65, John Gray Road, Great Doddington,
Wellingborough, Northants

e-mail: agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk

BLHA WEB SITE

Work is continuing on the development of the Bedfordshire
Local History Association’s web site and we will be adding
information about other Bedfordshire History organisations
followed by copies of recent issues of our newsletter.

The web site address is www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

Your comments on its function and contents are always
welcome, we want to make it as useful as possible to our
members and the wider public.

This book is the first in-depth account of the development of fever hospitals and fever nursing, mainly in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain. Rare social aspects are provided through probationers’ views of their training and patient impact case studies, and key nurse leaders are featured, including ex-fever nurse Edith Cavell. This book provides new insights into how the predominantly female work force coped with epidemics, some of which were of national significance. This book also reflects current concerns, including the challenging nature of infectious disease and biological warfare. This book will be vital reading for academics and students in nursing history and of great interest to current and former nursing staff. Patients, their relatives, medical, social and family historians, students of women’s history and control of infection nurses will all discover relevant data. Bedfordshire hospitals feature in the volume.


Luton High School for Girls began life in 1904 as Luton Secondary School: it was originally co-educational and occupied a disused hat factory on Park Square. In 1908 the school moved into a new purpose-built home also on Park Square, and was renamed Luton Modern School. As it became more popular, there was considerable pressure on accommodation and the girls moved to Alexandra Avenue, later adopting the High School name. For the first eleven years they lived in old army huts but in 1930 they were able to transfer to a new building that is now the home of Denbigh High School.

Miss Helen K. Sheldon, the redoubtable first Headmistress is still remembered for her zealous lists of rules and regulations.

In 1947 Mrs Eileen Evans became headmistress and the school went from strength to strength to become one of the largest of its kind in the country. In the 1960’s Luton introduced Comprehensive education and selective schools ceased to exist. Many mourned their passing.

Luton Technical School, which was co-educational began life in 1937 in the Park Square building with Dr. Sidney Charlesworth as its much respected headmaster. It had the reputation as a very happy school. Initially the courses were vocational but, in the 1950’s, the school became, in effect, a grammar school. Over the years many former pupils went on to achieve great success in their chosen careers. In 1958 a new school was built at Barnfield but soon the introduction of comprehensive education brought about the demise of this successful school.

The lives of the selective schools were very entwined and, in order to have a complete understanding of the success of over fifty years of selective education in Luton, it is necessary to study both volumes.


This book seeks to show the reader what life was like for all classes folk in Bedfordshire around 100 years ago. Some were so poor that they sat around a hole in the earth floor of their home with their legs dangling because they could not afford furniture. Others were so rich that they became gluttons and died from dropsy or spent their days in agony from gout. This book describes the ghastly sanitary situation in many villages with privies being emptied into a hole in the garden with the attendant terrible smells particularly in hot weather. Dentists were generally village blacksmiths who tied the patient to a chair and pulled out the offending tooth with piers, the kinder ones making you drunk first. Medicine was rudimentary and having an operation without anaesthetic was horrific.

This narrative is humorous, fascinating and informative.

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE is published by the BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Contributions are welcome 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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