For centuries Eaton Socon was the largest Bedfordshire parish – situated on the Great North Road and the River Great Ouse. Our visit will consist of a walk around the original small village lasting approximately 1½ hours. You will see the large village green, the River Mill, a view of the Norman Castle mound, and visit the local prison/lock-up and the unique church with its sculptures of local people involved in its building, the newest Bedfordshire Festival of Britain sign and lots more. Then there will be refreshments and a talk in the church. The talk will include features of the parish not seen, for example, Bushmead Priory, the Union Workhouse, several moated manor sites and links with different religions such as the strong links the Mormons had with the parish. The tour is led by Sue Jarrett, Local Historian and Chairman of Eatons Community Association. Parking is available outside St Mary’s Church, Great North Road: front car park and side car park, also some nearby roads. Meet at the Church Tower. The visit should end 6 to 6.30pm.

Details to be announced and sent to Society Secretaries
BLHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015
AND AGM
HOSTED BY
CLAPHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AT
CLAPHAM VILLAGE HALL
Saturday 13 June 2015

Registration: 9.00 am – AGM: 9.30–10 am
Annual Conference: 10.10 am to approx. 16.20 pm

No charge will be made for those who only wish to attend the AGM. Lunch and refreshments are included in the Event fee. There is a car park at the hall

Conference programme
9.00–9.30 am: Coffee and registration
9.30–10.00 am: AGM
10.10 am: Welcome by the Chairman, Mrs Mollie Foster, and Borough Councillor Mrs Jane Walker
10.15–10.55 am: The History of Clapham and the Church – John Woods, Local Historian
11.00–12.30 pm: Option of a visit to Felmersham for a walking tour and history of the village – led by Ken Shrimpton
   OR Answers on a Postcard: A video presentation looking at North Bedfordshire villages in the postcard collections of Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service.
12.30–2.00 pm: Buffet lunch and wine in the Hall
2.15–3.00 pm: North Bedfordshire Villages – Margaret Baddley, Local Historian
3.00–3.20 pm: Edward Arpin’s Diary of Life as a Grave Digger in Felmersham – Ken Shrimpton
3.20–3.30 pm: Bromham Park Ice House – Elizabeth Skinner
3.30–3.45 pm: Stories and Intrigues – Members of Clapham Historical Society
4.00 pm: Summing-up and close followed by tea or coffee and biscuits

Cost for the day including drinks and lunch: £19; cheques payable to Clapham Historical Society. Closing date for bookings, 15 May 2015. Send bookings to Mrs M Foster, Narly Oak, The Baulk, Green Lane, Clapham, Beds MK41 6AA.
From the Editor:

As a taster for our Spring Event at Eaton Socon (see page 1) the article in this issue is a history of the Cage and fire-engine house of that village. The Cage will be visited as part of our event; sadly the fire-engine house was demolished in 1909. Sue Jarrett the co-author of the article will lead our event on 23 May at Eaton Socon.

Unusually this time we have a guest book review, of *Pride of Peacocks*, from Richard Morgan, one of our regular contributors (page 13), and I review the latest offering from Colmworth and Neighbours (page 14) and a book the impact on rural villages in E Lancs of industrialisation (page 16). The photo of Flitwick Manor on page 2 of HIB 7.1 should have been published with an acknowledgement to Richard Morgan for permission to use it.

TED MARTIN
Notes and news

Langford Index of Names. Good news for family historians and those with roots in Langford. You can now download free of charge from the Langford & District History Society’s website (www.langfordhistorysociety.org.uk) a 16-page index to those referred to in the Society’s three books and also those in the Parish Council's Millennium publication, Langford: A Village Walk. The Society’s three books contain many photographs, so it is possible that a researcher could see a photo of their ancestors as well as a reference to them. An added advantage is that names recorded on the two village war memorials are also included with an indication as to which memorial contains the name.

Willington Dovecote and Stables, 2015 programme

Sunday, 26 April, 1–5 pm: the Willington Spring Challenge Event, with activities for all the family, including guided and self-guided walks around Bedford River Valley Park, in conjunction with Marston Vale Trust.

Sunday, 31 May, 1 to 5 pm: Classic Wheels and Local Transport, bring your veteran machine with you, or come to see the splendid display.

Friday, 5 June: Open-air theatre, ‘Robin Hood’ by the Cambridge Touring Theatre, at 6.30pm: an evening of hilarious family entertainment.

Sunday, 28 June, 1–5 pm: Archaeology Fair, with a dig by Angus Wainwright, National Trust archaeologist, and other attractions. If you would like to volunteer to be an archaeologist for the day please contact 01234 404879 or dorothy.jamieson@ntlworld.com

Sunday, 26 July, 1–5 pm: Bedfordshire Crafts, with stands in the Stables and a nearby marquee. Lots of room and interesting displays guaranteed.

Tuesday, 4 August evening: Classic Cars from 6 pm to dusk, enjoy the evening with veteran car enthusiasts.

Sunday, 30 August, 1 to 5 pm: Food and Farming display, with photographs of Willington’s agricultural history.

Saturday and Sunday, 12 and 13 September, yes, both of them Heritage Open Days: Crime in Willington, displays including information from the manor court rolls and other documents.

Sunday, 27 September: Tudor Willington, with hats and costumes for children to try on, and other attractions.

The Dovecote and Stables are open throughout the year by arrangement. For more information about events, open afternoons and visits, see the web-sites:

www.bedfordnt.org.uk or www.nationaltrust.org.uk

or email willingtondovecote@nationaltrust.org.uk or phone Phil O'Donoghue 01480 301494 or Judy Endersby 01234 838278.

Willington Dovecote and Stables, Church End, Willington, MK44 3PX Some advertised attractions may be subject to alteration or cancellation.
Archaeology on land west of the National Trust’s Willington Dovecote and Stable site. In July 2013, about 16 years after the National Trust first produced a resistivity survey of the land round the Dovecote and Stables, volunteers marked out two 20-metre squares west of the Stables. A new resistivity machine was demonstrated by Kevan Faddon and Bob Randall and used by several local volunteers.

Following that, in August, two trial pits were opened by Angus Wainwright, National Trust Archaeologist for this region. A larger volunteer team, made up of a former archaeologist, a geophysicist, photographer, someone who had used and kept a metal detector, representatives of the Museum’s Saturday Archaeology Workshop and people of all ages and experience from the local area, took part. See the picture above.

The oldest find was a prehistoric worked flint, and the most spectacular was the base of a yellow Victorian pottery vessel, see the picture to the left. They came from the pit shown in the foreground of the picture above. After finding evidence of the surface of a yard or path here, it became clear that there would not be any further finds from this pit.

The bottom of the pit in the background of the top picture was not reached in 2013, nor was it reached in 2014. Angus had hoped to find the corner of a building, and I hoped they would find evidence of a medieval manor site, but this was not to be, though two intriguingly large pieces of igneous rock were found. The pit was again filled in and will be reopened on Sunday, 28 June 2015.

Sunday, 28 June 2015 – the Archaeology Fair at the Tudor Stables. Our archaeology event this year is being held just before the schools break up, and we hope to again welcome young people from Higgins Museum Saturday Archaeology Workshops, several of whom were most helpful in 2014, and also youngsters from local schools. The deep pit will again be reopened.

We hope that many local archaeologists, whether individuals or groups, will come along, put up displays about what they are doing and share their interest and expertise with colleagues and other visitors. An extra attraction will be a trial pit dug in the Stables...
floor, to investigate the possible floor beneath and see whether any evidence of an earlier layout can be found.

Invitations will go out shortly to professionals and volunteers. If you would like to be sure of more information please contact Dorothy.jamieson@ntlworld.com or phone me on 01234 404879.

DOROTHY.JAMIESON

The Eaton Socon Cage

Eaton Socon’s unique village Cage or lock-up is positioned just off the Great North Road in the centre of the old village near the church. Visitors to this suburb of the present town of St Neots often wonder why the original village needed one and what it was used for.

Today the village of Eaton Socon is in Cambridgeshire but it was not always so, and many visitors are unaware of the village’s history. Up to 1965 the village and parish of Eaton Socon were in Bedfordshire, and had been for centuries. This village lock-up was important as it provided a place for the local drunks and other people who committed misdemeanours who could not be taken to St Neots as it was in Huntingdonshire. They could be put in the lock-up for the night and taken, if needed, to the magistrates in Bedford the following day.

The building of the Cage

The Cage in School Lane, Eaton Socon, goes back to the days, before the establishment of a county police force, when the parish was responsible for law and order within its own boundaries. In the early 19th century the vestry was the parish’s governing body and it remained so until it was replaced by the parish council. It was responsible for appointing the constable, one of the most important officers in the parish, and his responsibilities went far beyond those associated with law and order. At Eaton Socon there were the village stocks, which were repaired in 1807 and again in 1827. However, it was decided that more was needed and in May 1825 the Vestry ordered that a cage should be built ‘to confine the refractory’. Nothing was done that year, so the next year the Vestry ordered the vicar, the churchwardens and the overseers to attend to it. The result was that ‘the Cage’ or village lock-up was soon built. It is particularly interesting among surviving village lock-ups, as it has two cells, whereas many only have one. One of these cells was provided with a bench, which could also serve as a bed, and there were also chains to
restrain more violent inmates. The plastered ceiling was backed with iron plates to prevent prisoners breaking through the roof.

**A fire-engine house**

A few years later it gained a ‘twin’. The thatched cottages in the village were extremely susceptible to fire and it was decided that a fire engine for the parish was needed. In 1831 a subscription was raised to buy a parish fire engine and the engine house was built onto the side of the Cage. The subscription list (now in the Record Office at Bedford) shows that a total of £191 was raised to meet the cost of the engine and the building.

The fire engine house on the left and the Cage on the right – pre-1909. Many posters are on the buildings advertising local events

In January 1831 the fire engine was described as:

a strong Improved Patent Carriage Engine with Metallic Valves and Brass Pistons fixed in an Oak Cistern with side Pockets for Suction Pipes and Box for the Hose, Driving seat and foot board mounted on four best Steel Springs, faggotted Iron Axletrees Strong Spoke wheels, Ash fellies and Hoop tire, Fore Locking Carriage of seasoned Ash, eyes for shafts, Splinter bar and Pole for Post Horses. Painted Lt Blue picked out Vermillion, a Suction Pipe with Brass Screws and Copper Rose and Copper Branch Pipe to a Box to attach to the Engine.

This engine was, of course, horse-drawn and must have been an impressive sight when it was finally delivered from London to Eaton Socon. A letter from W J Tilly, of 166 Blackfriars Road, dated 31 January
1831, to Mr John Hobson says: ‘I beg to inform you the Fire Engine and apparatus as per Invoice on the other side was this day sent to the Three Cups Inn, Aldersgate Street, to be forwarded to you at Eaton by Allison which I trust will arrive safe.’ From January 1833 there survives a letter noting that 12 large leather buckets with writing on the sides had cost the parish a further £6 9s (£6.45).

Various documents survive for the building of the fire-engine house but none sadly survives for the lock-up. The exact number of building bricks and roofing tiles for the engine house is known and how much it cost for the scaffolding – the total cost being £13 5s (£13.25).

The Cage was clearly used quite frequently over the next 25 years or so, and occasionally an escape occurred – as the following report in the *St Neots Chronicle* of 27 February 1858 showed:

Eaton Socon – A Bird Escaped his Cage: On Friday last, a prisoner, charged with felony, was placed in the lock-up about noon to await his examination the next morning. About 10 o’clock at night, police-constable Bedlow saw him safely locked up, and about twelve o’clock went again but the bird had flown, having made a hole about two feet square in the brickwork, which was three feet thick. The lock-up was always considered to be impregnable; as several notorious characters have tried to make their escape out of it, but have failed. The prisoner is an Irishman, and is known to be a very clever and expert thief. The affair caused much merriment among the villagers.

Presumably the man made good his escape, as there is no further reference to him in later issues.

**The buildings fall into disuse**

As the 19th century progressed, the fire engine, the house and the Cage were used less and less, and eventually fell into total disuse. The County Surveyor’s report of 1892 states: ‘The building here belongs to the
parish; it is in a very dilapidated state, no use being made of same.’ An old Etonian, writing in 1965, however, reckoned that he could remember the last man who had been confined in the Cage. This was, he said, for drunkenness and happened in the mid-1890s. The fire engine had been allowed to fall into such disrepair that it no longer worked, and in 1896 the Parish Council sold it to Shand Mason and Co. Both the engine house and Cage became derelict. In 1900 it was said that the Cage was used to store oil, ladders and spare parts.

1909, the end of the fire-engine house
The Cage survived two major threats to its survival in the 20th century, see below. In keeping with many other parishes, Eaton Socon established an Institute for reading and recreation. There was some difficulty in finding a suitable site for this, but two possible plots were eventually discovered, one being behind the Cage and the engine house. A public meeting was held on 5 October 1908 to make a decision as to which plot would be best, and the one behind the Cage and engine house was the popular choice. Inevitably this led to a discussion about the future of these two, old, obsolete buildings. The chairman, John Walter Addington, said that it would be a good job to get them cleared away, and the meeting voted unanimously to ask the District Council to remove the Cage to provide an adequate access to the Institute. However, when the Institute was erected in 1909, it was just the engine house, described as the more modern part of the group, that was demolished.

The end of the Cage?
Nothing was done to maintain the Cage, and it continued to deteriorate until 1938–39 when some work was carried out on it through the initiative of John R H Bedford and local historian and archaeologist C F Tebbutt, at their own expense. By the 1960s, however, it was once again in a very poor state and, when the management committee of the Institute decided to carry out major restoration work on the building in 1962, it was felt that the Cage was such an eyesore with rotting timbers and crumbling brickwork, it would detract from anything they did to the outside of the Institute, and there was a determined move to remove it.

Although more moderate opinion talked of resiting it or cleaning it up, others wanted more drastic action and the Institute management committee were keen on its removal. The parish council was divided on
the issue and the fight to retain it, both in parish council meetings and elsewhere, was led by John R H Bedford, who saw it as an important part of the village’s heritage. John Bedford was quoted as saying that he would ‘enlist the aid of preservation societies and any other possible moves to acquire its retention where it now stands’. Harold White, editor of the *Bedfordshire Magazine*, became involved and also Professor Sir Albert Richardson, the eminent architect, who some 30 years before had overseen the restoration of Eaton Socon Church following the disastrous fire of 1930.

Several meetings followed and at one stormy meeting 27 people voted to save the building, with 17 against. A Ministry of Housing and Local Government enquiry was held at the Institute in July, and it was decided that the Cage would remain.

Although architecturally it was said to be of little interest, its historical significance made it worth retaining. A preservation order was made, but feelings still ran high in the village and one parish councillor went so far as to ask whether there was any chance of blowing up the Cage!

Despite assurances in 1962 that work would be carried out to improve its condition, little appeared to happen beyond the Parish Council voting
to fit a new lock and keeping it locked. This was necessary as boys used to play around it and dare one another to be shut in it.

The Cage in 1957 – note the drain pipe on the right and the broken garden fence in the foreground

1965: Beds and Hunts Naturalist Trust restore the Cage
A meeting was held in October 1962 with a sub-committee of the Bedfordshire County Council, Eaton Socon Parish Council, the Institute Management Committee, and the Beds and Hunts Naturalists Trust, which had expressed an interest in restoring ancient buildings. Progress was slow, and it was not until July 1963 that it was agreed that the Cage would be restored. At the end of September an impatient Institute Management Committee was calling for action on the restoration, which was estimated to cost around £175. More than another year passed before the details were hammered out, and in January 1965 it was announced that the Cage was to be leased at a peppercorn rent to Beds and Hunts Naturalists’ Trust, who would maintain it. The restoration was completed, and a plaque on the side of the Cage reads:

THE EATON SOCON CAGE
THIS ANCIENT LOCK-UP WAS BUILT
IN 1826 FOR THE CONFINEMENT
OF LOCAL MALEFACTORS.
RESTORED IN 1963, IT IS NOW
IN THE CARE OF THE
BEDFORDSHIRE AND
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
NATURALISTS TRUST.
1965–2008

During these years very little was done to maintain the building, but several things have occurred around it. In 1965 the line of the present A1 was decided, which resulted in the village of Eaton Socon changing counties from Bedfordshire to Huntingdonshire and in 1974 it changed again to Cambridgeshire. How this would affect the Cage would not be known for many years. In 1976 there was a fire which badly damaged the Institute, resulting in the building being demolished and being replaced by the present Jubilee Hall built further back on the site and opened in 1977, the year of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. This left the Cage at the entrance to the car park, which was not ideal and when, in the 1980s, it was suggested to move it physically across the road to a safer place, it was once again the villagers who said it should not be moved. This is where it was built and this is where it should stay!

2008: St Neots Town Council takes over the Cage

After many years of little or no work on the Cage its deterioration was becoming clear and around 2007 there were moves to carry out some work on the building. It was found that the Beds and Hunts Naturalists Trust (now The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants) had no knowledge that they were responsible for the building, were not paying any peppercorn rent to anyone, and had no knowledge as to who owned the building. It appeared that when the paperwork for the Institute had been completed in the 1960s, when the village first changed counties, the Cage was not mentioned and no paperwork could be found for its ownership. Newspaper interviews and visits from local television raised the question of ownership and finally, in 2008, with the agreement of the Land Registry, the St Neots Town Council adopted the Cage and will maintain this unique heritage for the future.

Other village lock-ups still remain in situ in Clophill, Harrold and Silsoe in Bedfordshire and Broughton, Fenstanton, Sawtry and Needingworth in old Huntingdonshire. However, the Eaton Socon Cage is unique in that it is larger than the normal village lock-up and it has survived several attempts to remove it. It is part of our heritage and with the ownership now in safe hands it should survive for many more years. The Eatons Community Association hold a key and open the Cage regularly in the summer months. It is also opened for pupils in nearby schools and other visits for local groups can be arranged.
The Cage today – older villagers recall that the T-shaped ironwork on the side of the building was the support for a lamp to light the road on dark nights.

The original article was written by David Bushby and has been updated by Sue Jarrett (August 2014).

**Book Reviews**


This is a very brief memoir of the Bedford firm of W & H Peacock, auctioneers, etc. from its establishment in 1901 to the present day. The author worked for Peacock’s for about half that time rising to become a Director. He has drawn a good deal on memory, supplemented by documents about the company, some of which he has rescued from destruction and deposited at BLARS.

It is written in a rather pedestrian style, enriched (if that is the word) by learned notes on anything that is mentioned in passing. Each of the 19 chapters is quite short – one less than a page. The author refers to himself as ‘the author’ throughout, and – presumably as a result – has omitted his own name from the index.

The book covers the successive moves to different premises, the changes in directors, the take-overs. There are also observations on the social history of Bedfordshire. For example, the malign effect of successive Rent Restriction Acts during the 1940s and 50s is discussed. There is a useful section in Chapter 5 on Bedford in 1948 (when the author joined Peacock’s) and its property market. A surprising matter is an egg packing station which was run by Peacock’s on their premises 1921–62.
There is a 10-page introduction by Prof Richard Moore-Colyer on ‘Auctions and Auction Houses in England: a Brief History’. This is fine so far as it goes, but it ignores two-thirds of Peacock’s business: the Surveying part which has its origin particularly in the Enclosure Awards of the 18th and 19th centuries; and the Estate Agency business which arose from the work of land agents for the estates of the gentry and nobility. Swaffield’s of Ampthill illustrate this perfectly, having begun in the early 19th century managing the Flitwick and other estates, and then evolving into modern Estate Agents in the 20th century.

The really odd thing about this work is that the introduction and memoir at just over 100 pages occupy only a quarter of the book. The rest consists of an enormous 300-page Appendix (in fact it is in the form of two appendices, of which Appendix 1 is the introduction to Appendix 2). This gives a blow-by-blow list of as many of Peacock’s property auctions as can be discovered from 1902 to 1988. It does not cover any other auctions – of furniture, vehicles, agricultural equipment, etc. The list is in tabular form (date, venue, description, price, newspaper and BLARS references), though some of the pages are left partially blank (why?). This information has a place at BLARS, but why do the rest of us need it? Furthermore, while a few of the records say who the seller was, none seem to mention the buyers. Yet Chapter 9 of the main text on Property Auction Sales manages to cover the same topic in a more digestible 6 pages and also gives us some of the buyers’ names. As an example, the Rushey Ford Estate was sold to a Mr F Ray (p 67), yet the Appendix (p 126) knows nothing of Mr Ray but mentions that the instruction to sell came from A B Chibnall & Son – a detail not on p 67. As a significant number of readers will be interested in people (well, relatives and ancestors), this seems to be a missed trick.

Those with a direct interest in Peacock’s will find this book invaluable. For the general reader the social history observations on Bedford will be the most useful.

Richard Morgan
including pioneers, the First World War, inter-War years, airships, etc, the Second World War – where he lists the contribution of Beds airfields and majors on the work of the US 8th Army Air Force. However, he does not mention the feat of RAF Henlow in erecting and test flying over 1000 Canadian-built Hurricanes between 1940 and 1943. In the post-war section the famous Old Warden collection is covered, as is, extensively, RAE Bedford its foundation, work and legacy. There is also a mention of the College of Aeronautics later Cranfield University, a section on developments after 2001 and information on the Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group set up to preserve the history and legacy of RAE Bedford. Ron Smith’s book on British Built Aircraft, Vol 4, Central and Eastern England, (see HIB, 5.2, Winter 2009/10), does not seem to have been consulted and might have yielded some more detail.

Then Sue Jarrett writes about ‘Collections of Eggs, Blackberries, Bones and Conkers in the Great War’ which is a tale of the help villages were able to give when women and children worked in small groups to collect eggs and blackberries to help the wounded and bones and conkers to help those serving at the front. The eggs were collected and taken to a depot which, in St Neots, was Mr Cobb a provisions merchant. In April 1916, 1,681 eggs were collected from the surrounding area and sent on to hospitals and this rose to 42,657 from 1916 to 1919. Some eggs had messages written on them which were replied to by the soldiers receiving them. Tons of blackberries were collected, most often by children, and bones were wanted by the Ministry of Munitions who asked that they be saved and resold to butchers for, in today’s money, 1p for 2 kilos. It seems that they were wanted for their grease! Children were encouraged to gather up conkers to make acetone a vital component of cordite. This article gives an unusual view of Home Front activities during the Great War and one that might otherwise have been overlooked.

Stephen Selley examines ‘Crime in St Neots in the Great War Period’, looking into the type and extent of crime reported as happening in the town. The article starts with a graph showing the types of cases brought before the Petty Sessions and then individual cases are referred to in two periods: 1912–1913 and 1917–1918. In the former section the crude Police methods of estimating vehicle speed through the town are brought into question but there seemed very little chance of acquittal and the penalties were severe. Child delinquents are not a new phenomenon as this article shows.

‘The Bedfordshire Wolds during the Era of the Turnpike System’ is a study by Michael Knight of how the Turnpike Era saw a gradual extension of the network away from the Great North Road to settlements which had previously been poorly served by inadequate roads. The turnpike tolls coupled with land enclosures contributed to widespread social unrest in the 18th century. Mr
Knight examines the growth of the turnpikes locally and their decline with the growth of the railways.

The following article by Stephen Smith, ‘The Fieldings of Honeydon – A Family of Faith and Fracture’, is my personal favourite in this collection, recounting the tale of a family who settled in Bedfordshire from Yorkshire and who all took part in mainly nonconformist religious activities. One sibling, Mary Fielding, followed her brother Joseph and sister Mercy to Toronto and later to Ohio and, having converted to Mormonism, married Hyrum Smith, brother of Joseph Smith, a leader of the Mormon Church. This conversion had a terrible effect on the family left in England and caused rifts between them. Mary travelled on the Long Trek to Salt Lake and her two-room farmhouse is preserved today in Salt Lake City as an example of her courage and faithfulness.

Alan Cox then gives an exhaustive survey of ‘Brick and Tile Making in Ravensden’, outlining its importance during the 19th century and tracing the history of each of the five brickworks set up in that period. He details the individuals and the complex inter-relationships of the families involved based on the censuses and genealogical sources which are referenced at the end of the article. I would suggest that the descriptions of the men in the caption to the photo on page 37 should be reversed: the one on the left appears to be holding the brick mould and the one on the right the fork!

As a conclusion to this excellent publication Thelma Marks pens an affectionate obituary of David Green, the Bedfordshire artist.

I would like to suggest two improvements for the Society to consider. Two of the contributors to this issue are known to me personally and this enhanced my enjoyment of their articles. Would it not be a good idea to put a brief biographical note about each contributor at the end of their articles or in a Contributors section somewhere? Also, one should not have to go to the Society’s website to find the cost of the publication – it should be printed on it! But, that said, this is an interesting and entertaining read.

**TED MARTIN**


It is perhaps unusual for a journal concerned with Bedfordshire and its history to review a book concerned with communities in rural East Lancashire in the Forest of Rossendale. However, if you have an interest in the Industrial Revolution and its impact on rural communities, this book will be well worth reading. It covers the period from the Industrial Revolution to the early 20th century, ‘explaining some of the most significant socio-economic developments occurring in the United Kingdom’. Dr Parker contributes to the debate on the
The text shows the important contribution that micro-studies can make to history, using case studies to give a wider perspective. The rural villages considered are similar to those near many industrial urban areas elsewhere in the UK. The author has used lesser known primary sources alongside traditional sources and the fairly technical text is in a readable style. Agricultural sources used include the existence and nature of farm buildings, size of holdings, family contributions to farm work and sources of farm household income. As to housing, aspects of family life and village life are examined, comparing these communities with ‘factory villages’ and ‘industrial towns’.

The book is attractively presented in hardback with sewn binding and full colour jacket. It is well produced and contains around 170 illustrations mostly in colour. The analysis is supported by photos, maps, graphs and tables. It has 21 pages of notes, 18 of bibliography and a five-page Index.

There is a brief early history of the area followed by a commentary showing how in the late 18th century, early industrialisation gave more work which expanded the population and diminished reliance on farming. Communities continued to grow until around the second quarter of the 19th century but this was followed by decline and they then had to find new means to survive. In the later 19th century the huge impact on rural settlements of full mechanisation and urbanisation, which took labour from the countryside, totally changed patterns of life. Consideration of what this meant in terms of growth followed by decline and survival is demonstrated by examining changing population patterns which show, for example, that although many people left the villages to pursue work, significant numbers returned to their birthplace.

Accounts such as this provide new insights into the history of little-known localities and leave a unique record for future generations. The book also challenges many traditional views of the countryside. Dr Parker’s book will appeal to those with an interest in rural industrial communities, in county history and to those studying socio-economic history.

TED MARTIN