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Bedfordshire Local History Association

AGM & Conference 2018
Saturday, 2 June 2018

Hosted by Clapham Historical Society at Clapham Village Hall

Provisional Programme
David Fowler: Bedfordshire Heroes
John Hele: Houses of Ampthill
Des Hoar: GIS & Its Application to Historical Research
Sue Garrett: St Neots History

Visit to St Thomas Becket Church with History of Clapham talk by John Wood
Lunch and refreshments

Autumn Event
The Military Intelligence Museum,
Chicksands, Bedfordshire

Full details for both events will be announced shortly and will be available from the Association’s website.
Bedfordshire Local History Association
BLHA Spring Event
a visit to
Island Hall, Godmanchester

Sunday, 13 May 2018, 2.30 to 5.30pm
Guided tour of the house and access to grounds, afternoon tea with sandwiches and cakes

Named after an ornamental island on the River Great Ouse, this charming Grade II* C18th house is owned by an award-winning interior designer. The current occupier is a descendant of Thomas Percy, of Gunpowder Plot fame. The Georgian rooms with fine detail and possessions are linked to the owners' ancestors since 1800. Described by Octavia Hill (founder of the National Trust) as ‘the loveliest, dearest house’. Its position is in a tranquil riverside setting.

The tour will be guided by a member of the family and full afternoon tea with sandwiches and cakes will be served.

The Island Hall website is www.islandhall.com

We hope you will be able to join us in what will be a fascinating afternoon.

Date and time: Sunday 13 May. The tour commences at 2.30pm, we expect to close the day between 5 and 5.30pm after a house tour, access to the gardens and afternoon tea.
Location: Island Hall is a redbrick house set back in Post Street on the north side of Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire, with parking in the Mill Yard free public car park PE29 2AQ
Cost and booking: The cost of the event is £18.50 per person, which includes the house tour and access to the gardens, followed by afternoon tea.

To secure a place, cheques must be received by Friday, 6 April. The number of places available for this trip is limited, so early booking is advised. Full booking details are on the following booking form. Alternatively, download a copy from the BLHA website: www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk
Bedfordshire Local History Association

BLHA Spring Event: A visit to Island Hall
Godmanchester

Booking Form

Please reserve ……… place(s) @ £18.50 each for the BLHA Spring Event. I enclose a cheque to the value of £……… payable to:
Bedfordshire Local History Association.
Receipt of the booking form will be confirmed by e-mail

Name(s):...........................................................................................................................................
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Your Local History Society?................................................................................................................

Please return the booking form with payment by Friday, 6 April 2018 to:

Colin West, BLHA Committee, 14 Fieldfare View, Wixams, Bedford MK42 6BL
Notes and news

**BLHA’s first booklet.** BLHA has sponsored the production of a booklet to celebrate the lives and achievements of Henry John Sylvester Stannard and his daughter Theresa to coincide with and complement the unveiling of blue plaques on their houses in Bedford. This is the first time the BLHA has published a booklet.

The Stannard dynasty of artists were larger than life characters in Bedfordshire between 1860–1951. The best-known and arguably the most able of them was Henry John Sylvester Stannard, whose work fell into disfavour immediately after his death, but interest has now revived. His daughter Theresa was also an able artist. The only biography of these painters is now over 30 years old and in the last few years significant new information has come to light – particularly on Sylvester’s colourful life. In addition to his acknowledged artistic ability, he was also a notable entertainer, musician and sportsman. As such, his exploits and misadventures were rarely out of the newspapers.

The author of the booklet is Richard Morgan who has edited two diaries of the Brooks family of Flitwick: *The Diary of a Bedfordshire Squire: John Thomas Brooks of Flitwick 1794–1858* (BHRS, Vol 66, 1987), and *The Diary of an Indian Cavalry Officer 1843–63, before, during and after the Mutiny: John Hatfield Brooks* (Pagoda Tree Press, Bath, 2003). He has also written *Life runneth as the Brooks: The Brooks Family in Bedfordshire* (Pagoda Tree Press, 2011). He is a regular contributor to this publication, most recently with his article ‘New Light on Dr George Witt, 1804–69’ in vol 7, Nos 9 & 10 (Winter 2016/17 and Spring 2017).

All societies and non-society members of BLHA will receive a free copy and there are a limited number of copies available for purchase from the BLHA website at £5, plus p & p. A review of the booklet will be found on page 20.
February 2018 saw the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, awarding the right to vote to women aged over 30. It was the outcome of a 60-year hard-fought campaign. The vote wasn’t won by suffragette direct action, but by constitutional means, through the lobbying and persuasion of national and local suffrage groups. This article tells the story of the women’s suffrage movement in Bedfordshire and the women who led it.

The women’s suffrage movement
Early attempts were made by supportive male politicians to secure women’s suffrage. Henry Hunt tried to amend the 1832 Reform Act to apply to women. John Stuart Mill proposed an amendment to the 1867 Second Reform Act to include women’s suffrage. In 1884 a backbench Suffrage Bill sought to offer the vote to single women who were householders. A women’s suffrage amendment was listed as part of the 1885 County Finance Bill, but abandoned following opposition from
William Gladstone. In 1886 the second reading of a Suffrage Bill was carried after a private members’ debate.¹

What was needed to drive change was the creation of a powerful grass-roots movement. Women’s suffrage societies began to be formed in the late-1840s in London, Manchester and Sheffield. In 1851 the Sheffield Female Political Association petitioned the House of Lords.²

Concerted national campaigning for women’s suffrage began in the 1870s. The Central Committee for the National Society for Women’s Suffrage (NSWS) was founded in 1871–72, the Women’s Franchise League in 1889. The National Union of Women’s Suffrage (NUWS) was formed in 1897, consolidating other societies, and pursuing constitutional means to secure the vote. Women campaigned for suffrage via national political societies – Conservative Primrose League (1883–) and the Women’s Liberal Foundation (1886–).³

The Victorian suffrage movement was middle class. It sought suffrage on equal terms with men, not universal suffrage. It focused on empowering single women and widows. Its means were non-violent – seeking constitutional reform through persuasion. Its Edwardian counterparts were also largely middle class, but split on how to achieve their aims. The Women’s Social and Political Union formed in 1903 (the ‘Suffragettes’) focused on direct action. Momentum grew rapidly until Autumn 1914, when campaigning by the NUWS and suffragette direct action were put on hold to support the war effort. Most local Suffrage Societies, including Bedford, dissolved in 1918 when women over 30 were given the vote.

**Suffragism in Bedfordshire**

*Figure 2: Advertisement for a suffrage meeting in Luton, 1879*  
(The Bedfordshire Herald, 7/3/1879)

From the 1870s the national women’s suffrage campaign gathered momentum and began to reach out beyond London and Manchester to counties like Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.⁴

A NSWS-sponsored public meeting was held in Luton Town Hall in March 1879 (see *Figure 2*) at which national organisers Miss Miller and Miss Downing spoke and received ‘a sympathetic audience’.⁵ The meeting led to a local committee being formed ⁶ and a ‘conference’ in December 1879 in the Town Hall. The former Mayor, Mr Webster, presided over the conference and
papers were read by Misses Biggs and Stormer. There were also NSWS meetings in Bedford in 1886 – addressed by the President, Millicent Fawcett – and 1890 and 1892, and at Harrold in 1891 at which Mrs Morgan-Browne of London spoke.

The diarist, Mrs Charlotte Bousfield, attended the meeting at Bedford in 1886:

. . . afterwards to Elstow to a meeting in the Green House, at which the latter [Miss Wilkinson] was due to speak on Women’s Suffrage, one of a series of meetings she has been holding in the neighbourhood of Bedford. These meetings were preliminary to a large meeting on the same subject held in the Corn Exchange at which the widow of the last Postmaster General with two other ladies present as Speakers supported by Mr J Howard & several other gentlemen. Mrs Fawcett was not eloquent but seemed to convince the large audience that women whose means contributed equally with men to the upholding of the Country ought to have a voice in the representation.

Women’s Suffrage Societies in Bedfordshire

In addition to organising meetings, the NUWSS supported the setting up of local Women’s Suffrage Society branches, forming a strong nationwide branch network.

At least six NUWSS branches (see Table 1) are known to have been active in Bedfordshire. Each society organised talks and lectures and lobbied opinion-formers, MPs and Councillors. The onset of the First World War curtailed the work of local suffrage groups, channelling their energy into war work.

Figure 3: NUWSS leaflet, 1913, publicising its branch network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Established (ref to)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedford &amp; North Beds</td>
<td>(May 1891)</td>
<td>Beds Times &amp; Independent, 2/5/1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>Sept 1909</td>
<td>Bedfordshire Archives, X114/1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biggleswade</td>
<td>Nov 1912</td>
<td>Biggleswade Chronicle, 15/11/1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leighton Buzzard</td>
<td>(May 1912)</td>
<td>Beds Adv &amp; Luton Times, 10/5/1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton &amp; Dunstable</td>
<td>Sept 1911</td>
<td>Luton Times &amp;Advertiser, 8/9/1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woburn Sands, Woburn, Aspley Guise</td>
<td>(Mar 1908)</td>
<td>Luton Times &amp;Advertiser, 20/3/1908</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bedford & North Bedfordshire Women’s Suffrage Society
The Bedford & North Bedfordshire WSS was active by the early 1890s. It probably had its origin in the momentum created by the Women’s Suffrage meeting at the Corn Exchange in March 1890. In May 1891 Mrs J W Haddock (Society President) and Mrs Amy Ransom (Secretary) wrote to the Bedfordshire Times & Independent from ‘The Bedford and North Bedfordshire WSS’ urging readers to write to their MP asking him to vote for the Women’s Franchise Bill. In November 1891 the Society organised a Women’s Suffrage meeting at the National School, Harrold. The principal speaker was Mrs Morgan-Browne, Secretary of the Central Society for Women’s Suffrage.

In December 1892 the Society organised a well-attended meeting at Mrs Jabez Carter’s house, 9 St Peter’s Street, during which a resolution was passed in favour of women’s suffrage. Mrs Morgan-Browne spoke. No references to the Society’s activities have been found after December 1892 and it is assumed that it lapsed. The leaders of the Bedford & North Bedfordshire WSS were:

- President: Mrs J W Haddock (wife of the Vicar of Clapham & Hon Canon of Ely).
- Honorary Secretary: Mrs Amy Ransom (wife of Edwin Ransom, Mayor, 1885) – she attended the 1886 public meeting and was a close friend of Mrs Bousfield. Amy Ransom remained an active suffragist for over 30 years – see the 1910 public meeting.

The Bedford Women’s Suffrage Society
The Bedford WSS was founded in September 1909. It was affiliated to the NUWSS, which helped to set it up (see below), federated to the Eastern Counties [Suffrage] Federation and had strong links with the Bedford Teachers’ Association. Like other societies affiliated to the NUWSS, its activities were strictly ‘constitutional’ – education, engagement, recruitment and lobbying. It had influential supporters, including the Duchess of Bedford, Lady St John, and Mr & Mrs R E Prothero of Oakley (Mr Prothero was a JP, Agent-in-Chief to the Duke of Bedford and Alderman on the County Council).

The Bedford WSS was well-organised, publishing a set of rules (see Figure 4, page 11), keeping detailed minutes and records. The following is based on those minutes, except where referenced otherwise. For a more detailed account see B Ricketts, ‘Votes For Women – The Suffrage Movement in Bedford’, Bedford Local History Magazine, April 2016, pp 3–18.

The prime movers behind the Bedford WSS were:

- Dr Ethel M Stacey (Honorary Secretary): A Bedford physician and surgeon. The Society’s inaugural meeting was held at her house, 34 Kimbolton Road.
Mrs Halliley (Honorary Treasurer): The wife of Charles Halliley (a prominent Bedford solicitor, former town councillor and chair of the Borough Education Committee, governor of the Harpur Trust, Conservative Agent for North Beds, and secretary to the Bedford Kindergarten & School). House at 30 Kimbolton Road.

Miss Edith Massey (founder-member & Committee member, 1913): Co-principal of St Andrew’s School for Girls (used for WSS ‘drawing room meetings’).

Miss Amy Walmsley (Honorary Secretary of the Society) – Founder & Head Mistress of the Kindergarten Training College and Preparatory Schools, The Crescent, and the branch school at Froebel House, Goldington Avenue. Both premises were used for WSS meetings. Member of the Borough Education Committee; governor of Luton Modern School. Friend of Margaret Stansfeld.¹⁸

Mrs Haskins (initial temporary Joint Honorary Secretary).

Mrs Basil Hope (founder-member & Committee member, 1913).

Miss Margaret Stansfeld, OBE (founder-member) – Physical educationist; founder of the Bedford Physical Training College (the Gymnasium was used for suffrage meetings), 37 Lansdowne Road.

Miss Chomley (founder-member & Honorary Treasurer in 1913): Mistress at the High School.

Mrs Rowland Hill (initial temporary Joint Honorary Secretary): The wife of Rowland Hill (the editor of the Bedfordshire Mercury), Pemberley Avenue.

Miss Johnson (founder-member): Graduate of Newnham College and member of the teaching staff at Froebel College.

Mrs Little (founder-member): wife of John Little, a master at Bedford School).

The prominent role of educationists in the Bedford WSS was mirrored in Buckinghamshire – Miss Frances Dove (founder of Wycombe Abbey School) was a founder and committee member of the High Wycombe WSS, hosting the initial meeting at the school.¹⁹

The Bedford WSS originated in a small ‘drawing room meeting’ held on 4 December 1908 in Dr Stacey’s house. Mrs Emma Knox Maitland (a well-known suffragist and a member of the London School Board) addressed a group of enthusiasts for the cause. They decided to form a Society for Women’s Suffrage in Bedford. The NUWSS was approached to send an organiser to Bedford to help start the Society and they lent Miss Marjorie Strachey for a week. Dr Stacey agreed to act as temporary Secretary and organise a public meeting.
The Bedford Society for Women's Suffrage.

RULES.

1.—The Society shall be called "The Bedford Society for Women's Suffrage."

2.—The object of the Society shall be to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for Women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men.

3.—The Society shall be affiliated to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and federated to the Oxon., Berks. and Bucks. Federation.

4.—The methods of the Society shall be constitutional.

5.—Membership of the Society is open to all men and women who approve of its object, adhere to its methods, and pay a Subscription of not less than 1s. per annum.

6.—The Financial Year shall end on July 31st of each year.

7.—The Society shall be governed by an Executive Committee consisting of President, Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary and eight other Members. Three Members of the Committee shall retire annually in rotation and be eligible for re-election.

8.—The Annual General Meeting shall be called as soon as possible after July 31st:

(a) To receive the Report and Financial Statement.

(b) To elect by ballot the President and Hon. Treasurer and also Members of the Executive Committee to vacancies caused by retiring Members.

(c) To transact any other business of which eight days' notice has been given.

9.—The Committee shall have power to fill vacancies which may occur during the year, and to elect other Officers.

10.—The Committee shall meet at least eight times a year.

11.—The Chairman shall only have a casting vote.

12.—Three shall form a quorum.

13.—At the request of ten Members the Secretary shall be required to call a Special Meeting within eight days.

Figure 4: Rules of the Bedford WSS, adopted in October 1913. Bedfordshire Archives, X114/3/4 (Reproduced by kind permission of Bedfordshire Archives)
The Society’s first public meetings were held in Bedford Town Hall on the afternoon and evening of 28 May 1909, addressed by Miss Sterling and Mrs Rackham (of Cambridge). ‘A great deal of disturbance occurred at the evening meeting, chiefly outside the Hall, & much damage was done, which the Police failed to prevent.’ This was an understatement. The evening public meeting ended in near riot. Mice were pushed through the windows of the Town Hall, stink bombs let off and windows smashed. The gallery was taken over by youths who shattered more windows. As ladies left the meeting they were pelted with eggs, flour and stones. One gentleman who tried to intervene was punched in the head. The lamps outside the Police Station were smashed. The Mayor arrived in his carriage to try to pacify the crowd, but was attacked with stones.20

The Society began to organise itself more formally, establishing a Committee on 29 September 1909, composed of Mrs Halliley as the Honorary Treasurer, Miss Walmsley and Dr Stacey as joint Honorary Secretaries, and six members. On 24 October 1909 the Society held a meeting at St Andrew’s School at which Miss Hodge, an Australian suffragist spoke on ‘Some Aspects of Women’s Suffrage in Australia’.

In August 1910 Miss Dora Mason, a NUWSS national organiser, conducted a local campaign backed by the Bedford WSS branch. She spoke at a lunchtime meeting for the men at the Queen’s engineering works, listened to ‘very quietly’. The Bedford branch organised a meeting in the market place at 8pm, at which Miss Mason would speak, supported by Mrs Ransom, Dr Stacey and Miss Massey. Before 8pm a large crowd had gathered, filling the market place and up the High Street, ‘hundreds of straw-hatted youths’. Garbage was thrown as Miss Mason mounted the rostrum. The police were reinforced, but they struggled to keep an open space in front of the rostrum, resisting ‘repeated ugly rushes’ by the young men. Bedford’s Chief Constable directed his force personally. There were further rushes and ‘a shower of missiles’. Miss Mason spoke for a few more minutes, but the crowd reached the rostrum, curtailing the meeting after only 40 minutes. Elderly Mrs Ransom was knocked over. The crowd pursued Miss Mason and WSS branch members across St Paul’s Square, pushing them and the police towards the river with cries of ‘put the Suffragettes in the river’. The police escort bundled Miss Mason and the ladies into the Customs & Excise Office (Bank Buildings) and bolted the door. The frustrated crowd smashed the rostrum. The Mayor arrived as Bank Buildings was besieged. Miss Mason made a rooftop escape through a dormer window onto the flat roof of Bank Buildings, thence to the street unobserved.21

Gradually, nationally, public opinion turned. When in January 1911 Mrs Fawcett, leader of the NUWSS, was invited to speak at the Kindergarten College by the Bedford WSS, she said that 32 town and city councils had petitioned the government in favour of the movement and hoped that Bedford would do so. Amy Walmsey wrote to the Council asking councillors to pass a motion in support of the
Conciliation Bill. In the subsequent debate, however, Councillor Miller moved that ‘the letter be referred to the Asylums Committee’. Councillor Roberts moved that the request should be declined as political discussion was forbidden in the Council Chamber. In February 1912 a deputation from the WSS met Mr Kellaway, MP, at the Town Hall, who reaffirmed his support for women’s suffrage.

The Society mounted an ambitious publicity and education programme in June 1913, supported by Dora Mason, the NUWSS regional organiser, including lectures at the major engineering works, to the Women’s Co-operative Guild, teachers’ organisations and a heavily policed public meeting. ‘All the meetings were perfectly orderly except one, & there is evidently a great deal of support, especially among the working men.’

To provide a physical presence in Bedford and facilities for members, in March 1913 the Committee rented two rooms for three months over a shop in St Peter’s Street. In October 1913 they opened a ‘WSS shop’ in Harpur Street. ‘Women’s Suffrage Society/non-militant; non-party’ was painted on the shop front. There was a first floor club room for members where books, papers and leaflets were laid out. To raise funds, the Society ran jumble sales.

The Bedford WSS supported the NUWSS national ‘Pilgrimage’ in July 1913, culminating in a mass demonstration in London, with local public meetings en-route. The Bedford branch met the march at Sandy, recruiting 21 new members as a result.

The Bedford WSS provided support to groups in neighbouring towns. In February 1914 the Society helped publicise a meeting at St Neots by canvassing villages in east Bedfordshire and providing stewards. Bedford supported the national NUWSS demonstration at the Albert Hall on 14 February 1914 and sold tickets. On 8 May 1914 a meeting was held in the Gymnasium, addressed by Miss Muriel Mathers, an Australian suffragette and prominent in the NUWSS, on ‘The Social & Political Evolution of Women’. Mathers was an active campaigner and effective publicist. In 1908 she had chained herself to the grille of the Ladies Gallery in the House of Commons and in 1909 had hired a hot-air balloon which flew over London, releasing pro-suffrage leaflets.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 led the Society, like many NUWSS branches, to largely abandon active campaigning, switching to war relief. In November 1914 the Society raised £435 for the Belgian Relief Fund. The branch Committee continued to meet, but the Society was moribund by 1916. It was finally dissolved on 21 June 1918 at a general meeting held at the Kindergarten College, chaired by Miss Walmsley. As the vote had been won members passed their baton (and the ‘Bedford Banner’) to the new Bedford Women’s Citizen Association.

What was the Bedford WSS’s legacy? Like NUWSS branches nationwide, the Bedford WSS helped to press the case for women’s suffrage and lobby opinion-formers and voters. It also created a local cohort of activists who applied their
enthusiasm and experience to other causes and local government. Amy Walmsley, for example, stood unsuccessfully in Bedford Borough Council by-elections in 1919. In 1920 she founded the Bedford branch of the National Council of Women Workers. In 1922 Amy was elected to Bedfordshire County Council. Dora Mason, a leading suffragist, became Bedford Borough Medical Officer, campaigning for women’s interests.

Notes
* A more detailed version of this article will be found in Bedford Local History Magazine, April 2016.
4. An excellent account of the women’s suffrage movement in Buckinghamshire is provided by C Cartwright in Burning to get the Vote: The women’s suffrage movement in central Buckinghamshire, 1904–1914 (2013).
16. Bedfordshire Archives, X114/1–6 series.
17. For a mini-biography see Bedford Local History Magazine, April 2018.

Bob Ricketts, CBE

The Granada Cinema, Bedford

What do Helen Shapiro, The Beatles, Roy Orbison and Dusty Springfield all have in common? They all performed at Bedford’s Granada Cinema now, sadly, a piece of cinema history and a building that, although gone, will not be forgotten. The Granada Cinema was built in 1934 on St Peter’s Street with a seating and standing capacity of approximately 1,750. The new Modern ‘Super Cinema’ Theatre was to include a theatre, shops, a café-restaurant and a refreshments kiosk and would be equipped with a mighty Wurlitzer cinema organ and a grand piano.

The Granada boasted a sumptuous art-
deco interior designed by the celebrated and gifted stage manager and interior decorator, Theodore Komisarjevsky. No expense was spared in the materials used in the design: marble and terrazzo came from Italy, 15 tons of maple flooring was imported from Canada, 1.25 miles of silk damask was purchased from Bradford and materials from as far away as Malaya and Trinidad all contributed to the impressive decoration. The cost of the entire project was £48,750 and a grand opening ceremony was held on 15 December 1934, where the band of His Majesty’s Scots Guards heralded the arrival of this premiere entertainment venue in Bedford.

Come with me, if you will, as we enter the rectangular foyer past a long line of arches and Corinthian pilasters – here, just in front, is the pay kiosk with its three ticket dispensers. Just leave your coat in the free cloakroom and climb the marble staircase where you come face to face with a large Georgian-style window, framed each side by a Corinthian column, all contributing to a sense of height. Wave-pattern moulding skirts the top of the walls of the wide staircase, which is centrally split in two, leading to the circle and the restaurant. Dominating the ceiling, a large metal and glass art-deco mounted electric lamp lights your way, together with several smaller polygonal lamps in the hall, stairs, stalls and circle. Your tread is softened by lush carpets, either red Wilton or red patterned Axminster, and, before the show, we will dine in the restaurant on the first floor where we can admire the view over St Peter’s Green and the church.

This wonderful theatre proved an immediate success in Bedford. In the mid-1930s the stage was added and, although only 17ft deep, was large enough for live shows and capable of housing a full orchestra and live performances by the main bands and artists of the day. The onset of war saw the cinema used for Sunday concerts, radio broadcasts and Holidays-at-Home concerts: the first in July 1943 by Cyril Fletcher, Harry Fryer and his Broadcasting Orchestra featured a 10-year-old Petula Clark. The post-war years ushered in, arguably, the golden age of cinema and the Granada welcomed large audiences throughout the 1950s to the blockbuster films of the time.

For me, the golden time of the Granada was the 1960s, when my mates and I used to attend the Saturday morning children’s matinée. Armed with our Jubbly’s (for those younger readers, these were triangular blocks of ice in different flavours), we queued up in ‘Granada Alley’ waiting for the moment when the doors would open and we would settle into our seats to await the start of the show. The lights would dim and the appearance from the depths of the orchestra pit of the Wurlitzer organ would herald the start of the morning’s entertainment.

This began by the singing of the matinée song, the Bedford ‘Granadier’. Birthdays were often celebrated and the birthday boy or girl was invited up on the stage to be presented with a card and an ice-cream cake by the compère who, I recall, was always accompanied by his Boxer dog, chasing the microphone lead across the stage. Following the opening of the show, the main programme would
commence with cartoons, followed by the main feature film and end with a weekly serial feature that would usually leave the hero in a desperate position and the audience in suspense until the following Saturday. The misty darkness was often penetrated by the searching torches of the usherettes, who were always on hand to keep order and nip any mischief in the bud, often initiated by a spud gun or pea shooter battle within the audience, not that I fell into their accusing beam of course!

In the 1960s, Bedford was established as part of the ‘Beat Boom’ circuit and the Granada was to become a popular venue for pop concerts and play an important part in that incredibly vibrant decade. One look at the Granada programmes for the mid-1960s reads like a ‘who’s who’ of the 1960s pop scene. I was fortunate enough to be taken by Mum and Dad with my brother to see Dusty Springfield, Kathy Kirby and The Searchers who appeared at the Granada on 12 March 1964.

The 1960s was a difficult act to follow and audience numbers started to fall dramatically during the 1970s. To try to attract larger audiences the decision was taken to convert the restaurant into a second screen, Granada 2, seating 209 patrons in 1974 but this met with only limited success.

In the 1980s rumours surfaced of plans to develop and change the Granada. An application for a bingo licence was filed and rejected in 1982, and in 1986, an application to develop the Granada as a night club, a bar with two cinema screens was denied and yet another bingo licence application was rejected.

Then, at the beginning of 1989, an announcement was made that the Granada had been sold for more than £1 million to new owners, Simkel Developments and City and County Developments who offered to keep the cinema functioning, until a new cinema opened. By April 1989, however, reports came to light that North Bedfordshire Borough Council were in negotiations to acquire the Granada site from the developers and had promising plans to convert the building into a theatre. Sadly, however, the discussions were fruitless and, in August 1989, the council voted by a narrow majority to grant the owner’s permission to demolish the cinema and develop the site.

Sadly, The Granada was demolished in 1991 to make way for yet another badly needed supermarket. This was strongly against the wishes of the people of Bedford, who argued that here was a building that should have been saved and kept as a theatre for Bedford. It is my view that, were the Granada here today, it would still attract the top performers and cinema-going audiences, who would prefer to watch the latest films in the comfort of art deco splendour rather than the sanitised, synthetic surrounds of a modern Multiplex venue. And so, as the new supermarket opened its doors for the first time, the doors closed on many happy memories for the people of Bedford and on an era of entertainment history that we will never see the likes of again and that it was a privilege to witness.

Steve Barratt
Saunderson Tractors

We have heard a lot about the Ivel tractor which Dan Albone of Biggleswade built as a lightweight petrol-powered general purpose agricultural vehicle. He completed his tractor design by November 1901 and filed for a patent on 15 February 1902. On 12 December 1902 he formed Ivel Agricultural Motors Ltd. He called this machine the ‘Ivel Agricultural Motor’, the word ‘tractor’ not coming into use until later. It won a silver medal at the Royal Agricultural Show, in 1903 and 1904; and in February 1904 an Ivel Agricultural Motor won a Gold Medal in the Chester Ploughing Match held at Waverton. This was the first time that such a competition was open to ploughs powered by a tractor. About 500 Ivels were built, and many were exported all over the world. The Ivel tractor was light, powerful and compact with one front wheel, a solid rubber tyre, and two large rear wheels. The engine was water-cooled, and had one forward and one reverse gear. It could be used as a stationary engine, using a pulley wheel on the left-hand side to drive agricultural machinery.

However, there was another, more successful, Bedfordshire tractor manufacturer, which seems appropriate for an, albeit small, agricultural county. Herbert Percy Saunderson was born in 1869 in Bedfordshire and he trained as a blacksmith. He spent time in Canada as a farmer and fur-trapper, and then returned home to set up an agency for the Canadian Massey-Harris company, operating from a small workshop behind his house in Kempston.

Saunderson also began to build a range of his own products which included windmills, pumps and weed-clearing machinery. In the late 1890s he developed a self-propelled vehicle – a light goods truck powered by a single-cylinder 6.5 x 10in engine that could run on either gas or petrol, with chain drive to the rear wheels and two forward speeds. It was entered into a trial of self-propelled vehicles organised by the Royal Agricultural Society in 1898, but experienced engine problems and could not complete the course.

In 1900, Saunderson opened the Elstow Works in Bedford and started to experiment with tractors. The first Saunderson tractor appeared in 1904 – not far behind Dan Albone’s ‘Ivel’. It was a two-wheeled machine intended to be coupled to various previously horse-drawn farm implements.

A few years later Saunderson produced his ‘Universal Motor’, a tractor producing 45–50 horsepower having three equal-sized wheels and three-wheel
drive. In 1907, one ‘Universal Motor’ achieved a gold medal at trials held by the Italian Government at Piacenza. A catalogue in 1908 promoted three different models of the ‘Universal Motor’, which included two different four-wheeled machines that could be used both on the road and in the field, using a removable lorry body. He moved into exports, shipping ‘Universal Motors’ to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1910 more finance was needed so a new partner was brought in and the company name was changed from H P Saunderson & Co to Saunderson & Gifkins. Several new tractors were introduced, ranging from the little Model L with a single-cylinder air-cooled engine and removable transport body to the huge Model V with a four-cylinder power unit developing around 50 hp, but the earlier designs were also offered.

In 1912 another new partner, Mr J Gawler Mills, was brought in and the company name was changed to Saunderson & Mills. The Model G tractor appeared which was to prove Saunderson’s most successful and long-lived model – one of these took first place in the agricultural trials at Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in 1913.

Left: Saunderson Model G tractor from the 1919 catalogue

By the start of the Great War conventional tractors were being produced just in time for the sales boom caused by the wartime labour shortage and, for a short time, Saundersons were Britain’s biggest tractor makers and the largest manufacturer of tractors outside the United States – Saunderson tractors were being used on every continent.

The final and most significant change to the range of Saunderson tractors came in 1916, when the design was completely revamped by repositioning the driver’s seat at the rear, to allow a better view of trailing implements, and the radiator to the front, amongst other changes.

In 1916 King George V chose to purchase a Model G tractor, plough and fuel/water wagon to use at Sandringham, which was a publicity coup for Saunderson. The tractors were also used on the Duchy of Cornwall estate of the Prince of Wales. An order for 400 Model G tractors and ploughs was placed by the British Board of Agriculture in 1917, which provided a massive boost for the company. About this time Mr Mills left the firm, and the name changed once again to the Saunderson Tractor & Implement Co.

This success was not to last as the 1920s agricultural slump hit the sales of all tractor manufacturers and the Fordson tractor came on the scene. Following the First World War there were also problems with the export market for Saunderson and the Model G began to look outdated. In a 1919 brochure there were just three models almost identical in appearance. An agreement was made to produce the
post-war range of tractors in France under the SCEMIA name. A 12–20hp ‘Super Light-Weight’ tractor with V-twin engine was introduced in 1923, but did not have much success. Another small tractor design with a more conventional engine, the Saunderson ‘Junior’, did not appear to have progressed beyond a prototype.

By 1924 Saunderson was looking for a buyer and Crossley Brothers (not Crossley Motors, which was the vehicle manufacturing limited company the brothers had founded) took over the business in 1922 which put them into competition in the vehicle business with Crossley Motors. The tractors were rebranded as Crossleys and they marketed the Model G for a few more years, but with little commercial success. Crossleys had previously supplied engines to Saundersons for a number of years. Saunderson stayed for a year in a consultancy role, before retiring to an estate in Bedfordshire with several of his tractors.

As a result of the takeover Crossley also entered railway locomotive building for a year because work in hand at Saundersons included three petrol-powered locomotives for Beswicks Limeworks of Hindlow, Derbyshire.

The factory at Bedford continued in operation for many years making small stationary engines as well as agricultural machinery. It was sold in the mid-1930s and was known as the Bedford Plough and Engineering Factory continuing to operate until the 1970s.

A Saunderson Model G tractor from 1914 is preserved in the Grampian Transport Museum at Alford near Aberdeen and a 1916 model is on display at Rutland County Museum in Oakham, Rutland.

![A Saunderson Universal tractor on harvest duties](image)

**References**

http://www.steel-wheels.net/saunderson.html
http://www.crossley-motors.co.uk
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Ted Martin
Review


Richard Morgan relates that the genesis of this booklet was when he was contacted by Trevor Stewart, Chairman of the Bedford Association of Tour Guides, who was looking into the possibility of placing a Blue Plaque on a Bedfordshire house lived in by Sylvester Stannard and his daughter Theresa. Richard writes: ‘The first point to establish was which houses did they live in, and when? This in turn meant looking into their private lives. Sylvester’s in particular I found was colourful and well-documented.’ This led to the present publication which endeavours to give a much more complete picture of Stannard’s life.

Mr Morgan has certainly provided that in his nine chapters which deal with the origins of the Stannard family back to Robert Alexander Stannard, c 1757–1823; Stannard’s life with his second wife Annie and the earlier years at Flitwick, his divorce, his third marriage in the 1920s and living at Buckden and Bedford. There is a chapter on Theresa’s marriage followed by Sylvester’s second divorce, fourth marriage and the 1930s. Theresa’s and Sylvester’s last years are related in separate chapters as are Sylvester’s interests and his art. There is also a comprehensive two-page index.

The previous work on Stannard (Anthony J Lester, *The Stannards of Bedfordshire* (Eastbourne Fine Art Publications, 1984)), was primarily about Sylvester Stannard as a painter, with much about his work, his exhibitions and the sales of his pictures with only about seven pages devoted to his life. This booklet gives us a much better picture of his art, his loves, his interests and his weaknesses. It also has much information on the life and work of his daughter, Theresa, and contains photographs of Stannard and his daughter and colour reproductions of two of his paintings and one of hers. Each page contains extensive footnotes detailing the sources and providing background information.

Richard Morgan is to be congratulated on the thoroughness of his research into this Bedfordshire artist as is the BLHA for sponsoring the publication and underwriting the costs.