

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

VOLUME 8, NO 11, SUMMER 2020

The Association's 27th Year

Contents

From the Editor: ~ page 2

Articles:

VE Day ~ page 2

The Brown family of Carlton and the Bunyan Connection: MIKE PRATT ~
page 5

Bunyan's Bedford: TREVOR STEWART ~ page 17

Society Bookshelf ~ page 22

Notes from the *Bedford Times* ~ page 23

VE Day Memories ~ page 24

History in Bedfordshire is published by the
BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

For HIB: Editor: Ted Martin, 2A The Leys, Langford, Beds SG18 9RS

Telephone: 01462 701096. E-mail: ed.martin39@btinternet.com

For BLHA: Secretary: Clive Makin, 32 Grange Road, Barton Le Clay, Bedford
MK45 4RE: Telephone: 01582 655785

Contributions are very welcome **and needed**: please telephone or e-mail the
Editor before sending any material.

All rights reserved. Copyright © 2020 BLHA and contributors

Bedfordshire Local History Association and contributors

ISSN 0968-9761

From the Editor

While we are coping with this unprecedented summer and the pandemic which has caused the suspension of our AGM and Annual Conference among thousands of other events, both national and international, we have decided to bring you two summer editions of HIB. Both editions will be longer than usual to give you more to read during the crisis.

This first regular edition starts with memories of VE Day, the 75th anniversary of which was due to be celebrated on 8 May. I am among the dwindling band of people who can remember that event, so I am going to present some memories here which were collated from my school friends when we met up again after (yes, really) a gap of 60 years. VE Day led to families reuniting after, in some cases, six years of absence, and our piece covers this aspect.

Families are the main theme of this issue and also of our additional Summer Special which will follow later in the summer. In this issue we have a very welcome and detailed article by Mike Pratt, former chairman of the now sadly closed Carlton and Chellington Society. In this article, Mike, who is a regular contributor to HIB, gives an account of the Brown family of Carlton and Chellington who could trace their ancestry back to John Bunyan. We conclude the issue with a look at the places in Bedford with links to Bunyan contributed by Trevor Stewart, some snippets from the 19th century *Bedford Times* and a final memory of VE Day. KEEP SAFE AND CARRY ON!

VE Day

In North London, on our estate, Ann remembered it as a special day with flags across the road. She sat next to her friend at a long table in the middle of the road at a party, with sandwiches, cakes, jelly and blancmanges. Much later in the day she remembered her Mother and Aunt running the three-legged race round the block with lots of laughter.

June remembered the parties and the big bonfires in the street in the night: 'the comradeship that was shared and the cornflower blancmange and junket, which were disgusting, mixed with jam sandwiches. We did not mind at all. Not 'Good Old Days' but, despite Mr Hitler, Happy Days!'

Pat celebrated the end of the war, away from our estate, with her friends and family in Bounds Green. They had a big party on the Green, everybody contributed and her grandmother made hundreds of iced cupcakes with violet leaves on top ('my grandmother was a cook and housekeeper for a dance school in Crouch End and her cakes were the best ever').



VE Day street party in North London with children having goodies to eat. (Photo: Ann Chandler)

Although Pat attended the VE Day Celebration at Bounds Green, she also somehow managed to go to the VE Day Celebration on the estate with her paternal grandparents and remembered all the patriotic bunting on the houses and the table down the centre of the road. 'Everybody was so cheerful and friendly in those days, neighbours knowing each other and ready to help each other out. My grandparents' next-door neighbour, who was a carpenter, even made me a beautiful dolls house and he barely knew me.'

It was also the end of her regular annual journeys between Arlesey and St Albans as life was returning to normal and she was enrolled permanently at Bounds Green Infants School where, nearly two years later, she was to meet her father for the first time that she could remember.

Trevor recalled that opposite his house was a bomb-site and most of the rubble had been cleared away. A local show was put on here to celebrate the end of the war. Several Morrison shelters were pushed together to make a stage and other people made curtains. Several people from the road then performed in the show one evening. There was music, singing and dancing and he enjoyed it all, 'never having seen anything like it before'. There was a bonfire to finish the evening.

There was also a street party for the children at this time:

We children enjoyed these, but I don't know where all the food came from as rationing was even worse after the war. It was probably fishpaste sandwiches and

some sort of home-made cake with home-made lemonade. I just remember that we enjoyed it all. The following year we had a fancy dress competition, too. Dad had managed to find a couple of costumes from somewhere and I went as a schoolteacher and Jenny went as a clown. We did not win!

Return of the Fathers

Ann's memory is of the day her Dad, a prisoner of war, came home:

My mother had bought two large union jack flags which she hung out of the front bedroom window. My father was so excited that he had sent two telegrams telling us of the times of his arrival. We had waited and waited but he still hadn't come so, as it was late, my mother told me to go to bed and as soon as he arrived she would wake me. True to her word, I felt a tug on my shoulder and quickly got out of bed we both rushed into the living room and Dad had let himself in as he had kept his own front-door key even when the Germans questioned him over it. He had just plonked himself down in the armchair as he still had his haversack on his back. I quickly jumped onto his knee and Mum and I both started excitedly chatting to him. I remember Dad laughing and saying: 'Whow, one at a time!'

Pat's father had been assigned to the 'Fighting Tigers', the Royal Leicestershire Regiment, in September 1939 and had been involved in the D-Day Landings in 1944 but was not demobilised until the end of 1946:

I was at school the day he came home, and my mother decided he should pick me up as a surprise. I was across the road doing somersaults on the railings of the bus stop and he came marching over to me to get me off. I didn't know who he was and I ran all the way home and locked myself in the lavatory. Eventually I was enticed out and was properly introduced, but it took a while to accept who he was.

My Dad was a total stranger to me when he first came back from the war and it took me a while to get used to him. The second day he was home he wanted to take my Mum out dancing, but I was adamant that she shouldn't go and turned on the tears, which usually worked like a charm, but on this occasion were to no avail. So I got up and walked over to him with my doll in my hand (one that he had sent me from France) and hit him hard on the knee with it, broke the doll's head and his knee. He ended up with water on the knee and a limp for a few days – he had managed to get through the war without an injury, and I did what the Germans couldn't do!

As my Father was in a reserved occupation, the returning soldier in our family was my uncle, my mother's youngest brother, who had been a quiet, reserved young man when conscripted into the Royal Artillery and whose war had taken him with the Eighth Army across the desert, El Alamein, Sicily, Italy, Austria, Berlin and finally Palestine. The war affected him badly

for the rest of his life and after he married in 1947 he lived quietly, having no children, until his death at the age of 92 in 2011, just predeceasing his centenarian wife by a week.

When he came back he used to tell me suitably edited stories of his exploits in a quiet, matter of fact way and showed me some of his souvenirs: a Nazi armband and elaborate black SS dagger. But really he wanted to forget all about it and it was only very late in his life that I was able to persuade him to apply for his medals and these were placed on his coffin at his funeral.

Ted Martin

—

The Brown family of Carlton and the Bunyan Connection

This article was prompted by a document found in the Record Office in Bedford by Carlton Society member Pam Hider. It is a glebe terrier for Carlton, dated 1822, a catalogue of the glebe land owned by the church, from which the rector derived his income. The following is an extract from it:

. . . After leaving Home Close (in which the Rectory House stands) & coming out to the road leading to Turvey, there is a small piece of land called Fauks Corner by estimation about half an acre; bounded by the road & the property of John & S . . . Gostick. After crossing the road leading from Carlton to Turvey, at Fauks Corner, we again enter the Rectorial Lands; and in a full south direction up towards an old mansion called Fishers & terminated by a lane leading to West End, the said lane being the boundary to the south; it is bounded on the east by the property of Lord Hampden, Robert Eyles & Robert Trustler; on the north by the Turvey road; and on the west by a small close now in the occupation of Thomas Eyels; the property of Thomas Alston Esq, and also by Widow Brown of Fishers . . .

It should be noted that:

- The way out of the Rectory grounds followed the present path from Rectory Close to the Causeway, sometimes referred to as the 'Gannick'.
- The piece of land called 'Fauks Corner' was almost certainly what was more recently known as the 'Donkey Field', on which donkeys were kept before two modern bungalows and three homes for senior citizens were built on it in the 1980s.
- The track leading southwards on the opposite side of the Causeway used to be known as the Slade, because that was the name of the field to the left of it (part of the rectory land, which extended in that direction as far as the Stevington parish boundary).
- The 'lane leading to West End' is now known as Piper's Highway, which

runs at its other end into Edens Lane these days, but formerly extended as far as School Lane, passing some cottages belonging to the church, now long demolished – this area was historically known as ‘West End’.

The quoted snippet defines a piece of land lying between Piper’s Highway and the Causeway, and for me it has two particularly interesting features. First, it mentions ‘an old mansion called Fishers’, clearly situated somewhere close to the intersection of Piper’s Highway with the Slade, which is near the modern bungalow. Secondly, there is a mention of ‘Widow Brown of Fishers’. This implies that in 1822 the mansion called Fishers still existed, and that it was owned or occupied by Widow Brown.

In what follows I will first write about the Fisher family, from which the mansion acquired its name, and who possibly built it originally. Then I will describe how the mansion came into the possession of the Brown family, who may have been the last people to live there before it was demolished.

The Carlton baptismal register commenced in 1554, and quite soon after that we find the christening of William, son of Hugh Fisher, on 26 December 1565. A few decades later we find the first mention of a Gideon Fisher, who had a son Peter christened in 1625, and several other children in the following years. This Gideon Fisher probably originated elsewhere; a brief genealogy of him in *Harvey’s History of Willey Hundred* suggests that his parents lived in Hounslow, Middlesex. Later there was a second Gideon Fisher in Carlton, a son of the first. Sometime during the 1600s the Fishers turned nonconformist and it was probably the second Gideon Fisher who licensed his house for ‘Congregational’ worship under Charles II’s short-lived Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 (it was withdrawn less than two years later). It is believed that John Bunyan preached at Fishers on more than one occasion.

There are several documents at the Record Office mentioning the Fishers mansion. For example, a 1736 marriage settlement between Charles Bithrey and his first wife Persiana Moxon mentions his expectations of becoming the future owner of (amongst other property) a ‘manor house in Carlton formerly in the occupation of Gideon Fisher, gentleman, deceased’, and several areas of land nearby: New Close (pasture, 7 acres), Mowing Close (7 acres), Palmers Close (pasture, 5 acres), plus two neighbouring cottages. There is a New Close in Chellington, near Freer’s Wood, but certainly Palmers and Mowing Closes are adjacent to where the Fishers mansion is thought to have stood (it was never, as far as we know, a true manor house, in spite of its description as such in the document). That Charles did eventually take possession of the mansion is shown by several documents referring to him as ‘Charles Bithrey of Fishers’,

including the deeds of the Carlton Baptist Meeting, dated 1760, of which he was a trustee.

Charles Bithrey of Fishers married twice, and both marriages were childless. He was a comparatively wealthy man, having made his money as a merchant in Bedford, shipping coal and other commodities up and down the Great Ouse from King's Lynn. His second wife, Frances Brown, was a great-granddaughter of John Bunyan. Her grandmother was Sarah, the fifth of Bunyan's six children, who married a William Brown in 1686; both were of the parish of St Cuthbert in Bedford.

Until recently (things may have changed with the advent of DNA testing), the only known certain descendants of John Bunyan living in the 18th and 19th centuries had the marriage of William and Sarah Brown in their ancestry. There were other people who declared themselves to be direct descendants of Bunyan, in both Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, but none of them was able to prove their claim.

Charles Bithrey died in 1784. In his will he made a number of monetary bequests ranging in value from £5 to £100, and directed that an annuity of £10 be paid to Mary Brown his mother-in law, who was thus clearly still alive when the will was made in 1781. Charles left all his houses and land in Carlton, Chellington and Turvey first to his wife Frances during her lifetime, then to his sister Elizabeth Woodward, then to his wife's nephew William Brown, his wife and children. Charles also owned land in Keysoe and Ravensden and a leasehold estate in Bedford, which he left to Frances outright. Some farmland in Cardington was left to Frances for her life, then to some of his own relatives. His goods, chattels and personal estate went to Frances, whom he made his sole executrix.

Charles' widow Frances, who was younger than him, survived until 1803 when she died at the age of about 81. She made her will in 1799, and, since she had neither children nor step-children of her own, her primary beneficiaries were mostly her nephews. One major beneficiary was to have been nephew William Brown of Carlton, another Bunyan descendant, but William died in 1800, and under a codicil to her will made after his death Frances left his portion to his widow Mary (the 'Widow Brown' mentioned in the document I quoted at the beginning of this article) and William's children. This legacy consisted of land and buildings in Carlton, which I will discuss later. There was also a major bequest to another nephew, William Brown of Bedford, who received land and property in Keysoe. Charles Vorley, Carlton's Baptist minister, also benefited – he was one of the executors of Frances' will (and was given £10 for his trouble). He also received £200-worth of 4% bank annuities, and:

all my Lands Tenements Hereditaments and Estate in Ravensden in the County of Bedford . . . my Bed Bedstead and Bedding and all other Furniture whatsoever in my best Room my Easy Chair my Eight day Clock my Cedar Nest of Drawers my Silver Salts and Castors and such of my Books as are not hereby otherwise disposed of.

Frances had previously made him a present of a house in Carlton High Street.

Returning to 'William Brown of Carlton', it is not known for certain where he originated, though he certainly died in Carlton and was buried there on 23 November 1800 – the burial record refers to 'Wm Brown, of Fishers'. He had been a minor beneficiary of Charles Bithrey's will, made in 1781 and proved in 1784. Some Bunyan biographers give his wife's maiden surname as Kenworthy, but on what grounds, I do not know. He and his family seem originally to have been dissenters (as were Charles and Frances Bithrey), but there are entries in the Carlton baptismal register dated 31 January 1798 showing that he, his wife Mary and their five children were all baptised into the Church of England on that day. What is more, the actual dates of birth of all seven individuals are given:

William Brown: 10 January 1754; Mary Brown: 29 September 1753; William Brown Jr: 30 October 1781; Frances Brown: 4 November 1783; Sarah Brown: 27 April 1786; Mary Brown Jr: 28 May 1789; Elizabeth Brown: 1 November 1792.

These baptisms occurred shortly after the Rev Charles Vorley became pastor of the Carlton Baptist Meeting in 1796. At around that time several other Carlton families besides the Browns left the Baptists and joined the established church – Vorley's pastorate was a long and successful one and Frances Bithrey thought very highly of him (as has been seen), but his ministry does not seem to have suited everybody!

At this point I refer to the book *John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Work*, first published in 1885 by John Brown, BA, DD, Minister of the Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, from 1864 to 1903. Despite his name, I believe the author was no relative of the Brown family under discussion. In the 1880s, while writing his book, he tracked down some of the descendants of the offspring of William and Mary Brown listed above, and talked to them. His findings have provided useful pointers for fleshing out the details of this family. In the following paragraphs his account is given in italics and my additional comments in normal type.

'William Brown Jr died in 1848, leaving children George, Richard, John, and Sarah Brown, who lived together unmarried at Bozeat in Northamptonshire, Thomas Brown of Wellingborough, Stephen Brown of Guilsborough in the

same county, and Henry Brown of Great Oaks Farm at Turvey, in Bedfordshire. Using Carlton parish records and data mainly from the 1881 census, taken shortly before Dr Brown's book was published, I have established the sequence of children of William Brown Jr and his wife Sarah to be as follows (the dates are approximate birth years):

William Brown, 1811, born in Carlton; Charles Brown, 1812, ditto; Mary Brown, 1815, ditto; George Brown, 1817, ditto; Richard Brown, 1818, ditto; Sarah Brown, 1820, ditto; Thomas Brown, 1823, ditto; John Brown, 1825, born in Farndish, Beds; Stephen Brown, 1829, ditto; Henry Brown, 1831, ditto.

Dr Brown's list for some reason omits William, Charles and Mary, but they have baptismal records from Carlton, and they appear in 1851 census returns. At that time William, George, Richard, Sarah, Thomas and John lived on a farm in Farndish (a hamlet of Podington), where the head of household was their mother Sarah, who gave her age as 65 and her birthplace as Pitsford, Northants. Sarah was by now a widow, her husband William having died in Farndish in 1848. In the same census Charles, Mary, Stephen and Henry were all living together in Podington, where Charles, the eldest, described himself as 'Farmer of 200 acres employing 6 labourers'. These two 1851 census returns account for all 10 children of William and Sarah Brown, who had married in Pitsford in 1810. Her maiden surname was Benbrook.

Apart from his three omissions, Dr Brown's account of the members of this family is otherwise correct. In the 1881 census Richard, George, Sarah and John were indeed living together in Church Lane, Bozeat, all unmarried; the only one of them specifying anything in the nature of an occupation was Richard ('Retired farmer'). Similarly, Thomas was found unmarried in Wellingborough, making a living as a bookseller and stationer. His brother Stephen was listed in Guilsborough – he was a licensed victualler at a pub called the Ward Arms. Unlike most of his brothers, Stephen Brown was married. In the same census Henry Brown was found at Great Oaks Farm in Turvey, as Dr Brown claims; he was a 'Farmer of 320 acres employing 7 men and 4 boys'. Like his brother Stephen, he too was married.

The foregoing accounts for the family of William, the son of the original William and Mary Brown. However, that couple also had the four daughters listed earlier. Regarding each of them, I will quote first Dr Brown's summary in italics, as previously, and then add any further information I have.

'Frances married William Johnson; two of their daughters lived at Newton Blossomville, Bucks; and one at Stagsden, in Bedfordshire.'

The marriage of William and Frances took place in Carlton in 1812; the marriage record describes William Johnson as a widower and lace merchant, of Chellington. There are five baptismal records from Chellington for children of this marriage:

William Johnson, 3 April 1814; John Bunyan Johnson, 12 May 1816; Mary Ann Johnson, 17 August 1817; Maria Johnson, 6 June 1819; Jane Johnson, 6 June 1819.

The name of the second son clearly reflects his Bunyan ancestry. Some members of this family are found living in Carlton (High) Street in the 1841 census. William's occupation is then given as 'Surveyor', and Frances is a 'Lace Maker'. The rest of the record is very faint, but I am fairly certain that the first son was a 'Shoemaker' and the second a 'Maltster' – there was a maltings at the former Angel pub in Carlton High Street. Of John Bunyan Johnson, Dr Brown records that he was 'a man who in his stalwart strength was famous for being able to run up a ladder with a sack of barley under each arm, each sack weighing some two hundredweight', doubtless a useful capability for a maltster. However, he died in 1847 at the age of 31, perhaps as a result of over-exertion.

In 1851 Frances was still living in Carlton High Street with her unmarried son William, but she was by now a widow – her husband had died the previous year, aged 75. The 1881 census finds her daughter Mary Ann married to Joseph Millward, a 'Shopkeeper and Shoemaker', living in Newton Blossomville, Bucks, with one son still living at home. Her sister Maria married George Bransom, an agricultural labourer, and they too lived in Newton Blossomville. They had several children, but Maria did not make it to the 1881 census – she died in 1869. As for Jane, she married Joseph Parriss in Carlton in 1838, and after he died she married John Bonney of Stagsden in 1860. Her second husband, a former wheelwright, was landlord of the White Horse pub at Stagsden, which Jane continued to run for many years after his death in 1875. As far as I can tell she had no surviving children. Thus Dr Brown is again proved correct concerning Frances and her daughters. I do not believe that either of the sons of Frances Johnson's family ever married.

'Sarah married Stephen Benbrook, and her children emigrated to America.'

This marriage took place in Carlton, in 1806. The bridegroom, a carpenter, was from Pitsford, Northants. The connection to Pitsford is interesting, because that was the birthplace of Sarah's sister-in-law, William's wife, whose maiden name was also Benbrook – the two were in fact brother and sister. Stephen and Sarah lived at first in Pitsford, where they had 10 children over the period 1807–1829, one of whom died in infancy. Dr Brown does not tell the

whole truth when he says that the children went to America: in fact their parents went as well. In 1832 the entire family sailed (quite literally, in those days) for New York City on the barque *Netherdale*. They settled in the neighbourhood of Bedminster, Somerset County, New Jersey, USA.

'Mary married William Davison of Turvey; their youngest daughter, the only surviving child of the marriage, lived in Toronto, Canada.'

I have been unable to find a record of this marriage, but William and Mary appear in the 1841 census in Turvey, where he was a 'Farmer and watchmaker'. William was about 32 years older than Mary, and the census lists four children: William (born in 1813), John (about 1821), Elizabeth (about 1825) and Jane (about 1828). None of them was baptised in infancy, perhaps because William Sr was some kind of nonconformist. It is possible that there were other children who died young, and there appears to have been a son, Thomas, who was away from home when the census was taken. William Davison Sr died in 1844 at the age of 87, and in May 1845 his two daughters were baptised in Turvey into the Church of England. William's widow Mary died in November of that same year, aged 56. She left a will, showing that by this time her son John had already died and that she had four remaining children: William Jr, Thomas, Elizabeth and Jane. But then in 1848 son William Jr also died, aged only 33. The following year a Thomas Davison, aged 28 (probably the son Thomas who was missing in the 1841 census) was buried in Turvey. He was said to be from adjacent Newton Blossomville, but his burial place almost certainly reflects his place of birth.

Of the two sisters, Elizabeth was married in 1845, in Turvey, to John Bonney of Stagsden, wheelwright, who later became licensee at the White Horse pub in Stagsden. John and Elizabeth Bonney had three daughters in Stagsden over the period 1847–1853 (Dr Brown overlooked these children in his survey), but Elizabeth died there in 1856, aged only 30. In 1860 John remarried in Stagsden, his new wife being Elizabeth's cousin the former Jane Johnson of Carlton, already mentioned. John died in 1875, leaving a will in which Henry Brown of Great Oaks Farm, Turvey (discussed earlier) was named as an executor.

Jane, the younger sister, married Benjamin Hickman Foster of Cranfield in 1850. The ceremony took place at St George's, Hanover Square, in London and this couple appears in the 1851 census in Cranfield, where Benjamin was proprietor of the Swan Inn. Jane bore two children there before her husband died in 1856; only the first child, William, survived infancy. Jane Foster next appears in the 1861 census as landlady of the Neptune Inn in Newport Pagnell, in which town her son William was a pupil at a boarding school. From that point I can find no further trace of them. Dr Brown may well have been right

in saying that Jane went to Canada, but I have so far been unable to confirm his statement.

'Elizabeth married a man surnamed Norman, but died childless.'

This marriage took place in Carlton on 23 November 1824, by which time Elizabeth was aged about 32. Her bridegroom was John Norman of Bedford, St Peter's. I have not so far been able to find further details of her marriage, and must take Dr Brown's word that Elizabeth died childless.

This completes my survey of the two or three generations of accredited John Bunyan descendants who spent some of their time in Carlton. As Dr Brown pointed out in his book,

The different members of this widespread family were quite aware of their relationship to Bunyan, but seem not to have felt any very lively interest in their kinship. One of them, a man of sixty-five, admitted that though he knew he was descended from its author, he had not read *The Pilgrim's Progress*, saying that he never was much given to books.

At this point I will return to Frances Bithrey's will, and her legacy to the widowed Mary Brown and her five children. This was as follows:

- A close of pasture called Rayners Close was given to the five children, as tenants in common.
- Her 'Wearing Apparel' was given to the four daughters.
- The residue of her effects and estate after payment of her debts, funeral expenses, etc, was given to Mary Brown and the five children in equal shares, to be received in the case of the children at age 21 or on marriage if earlier.
- Frances also requested that 'none of the fixtures in and about my Dwelling house at the time of my Decease shall be sold or removed but the same shall remain there as Standards and Heirlooms'.

Interestingly, the much later will of Mary Davison of Turvey mentions Rayner's Close, the plot of land in Carlton that had been left to the Brown children in their great-aunt Frances Bithrey's will, and which clearly had been part of Mary's share of Frances' estate.

It is possible to follow some of what subsequently happened to the former Fishers land from Carlton Land Tax records, which were compiled annually. These unfortunately do not specify the particular tracts of land associated with the various taxpayers, but they do show changes in land ownership. The Land Tax records start in 1797, and for several years they show that Frances

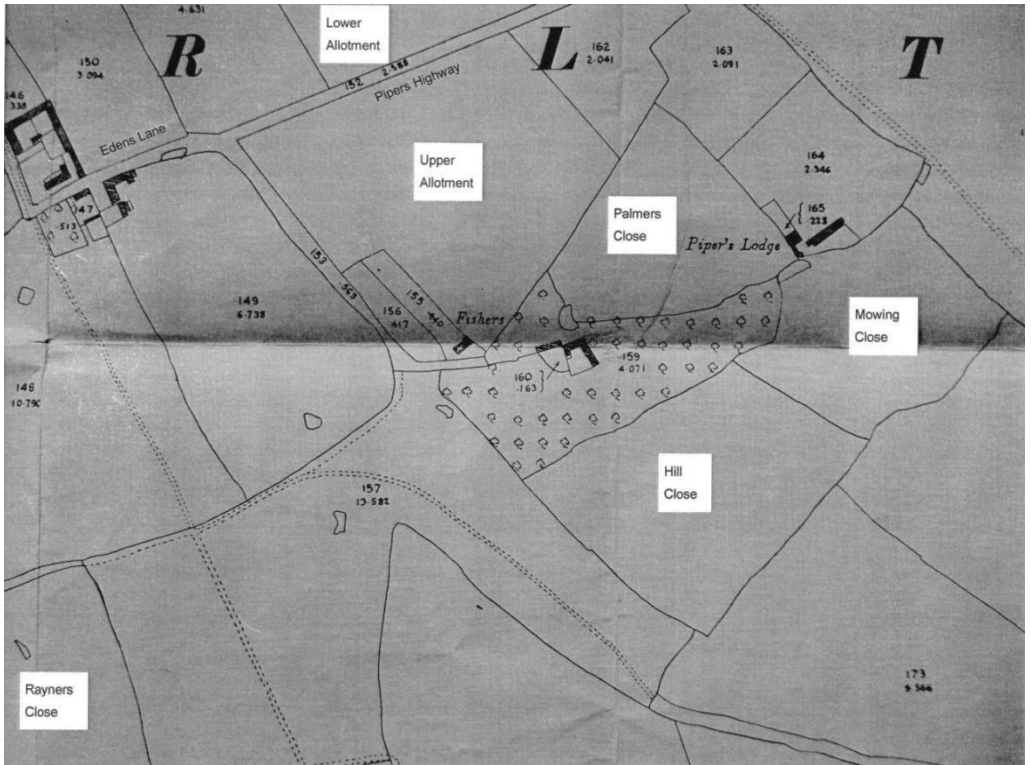
Bithrey paid £6 14s od per annum on her holdings, and that a tenant, Jonathan Hopkins, used her land.

In 1803 (the year of Frances' death), her nephew's widow Mary Brown was shown as the owner, and the land was still tenanted by Jonathan Hopkins, but in 1804 Mary Brown was shown as occupying the land herself. In 1806 it appears that about half the land had been sold by the family, because the tax paid fell from £6 14s od to £3 15s od. This situation continued until 1812, when there was a minor change. Mary's eldest son William was now married, and he seems to have taken possession of a house owned by the family, because he was paying 2s od (which was generally the amount payable on a moderately-sized house), while Mary's rent had reduced accordingly to £3 13s od. Confusingly, though, Mary was shown as occupying the house – perhaps she had moved out of the big house to make room for William, who was now married and had a growing family. The next change came in 1818, when Stephen Benbrook, who had married Mary's daughter Sarah, paid tax of 2s.od on what was probably another house, further reducing Mary's tax payment to £3 11s od.

Matters changed fundamentally in 1824 because, as shown earlier, William Brown's family upped sticks from Carlton and moved *en masse* to a farm several miles away at Farndish. The 1841 census finds all of them living there except son George, but he reappears in later censuses. Even William's mother Mary was there with them, now aged 86, having outlived her husband William Sr by 41 years. She died the following year.

In 1824, then, the Carlton Land Tax record makes no mention of Mary Brown, while her son William now owned land rated at only 12s 2d. The owners of the rest of Mary's former holding were William Johnson, Stephen Benbrook, William Davison and Elizabeth Brown. The first three were the husbands of Mary's daughters Frances, Sarah and Mary (at this time married women could not own property in their own right), and the last was her daughter Elizabeth, who did not marry until late in the year concerned. All the land still owned by the offspring of Mary Brown was now charged at £3 16s, roughly the same as the family had paid in 1806, but its ownership had become fragmented, and three of its owners were not now Carlton residents.

A further year later, in 1825, yet more land had been sold off. Of the previous year's landholders only William Davison and William Johnson appeared on the record, the former paying 10s 4d for some land and a house, the latter paying just 1s od for another (small) house. This situation then persisted for some years. The land owned by William Davison must have been Rayner's Close, which, as mentioned earlier, had come to William's wife Mary from Frances Bithrey's estate.



In the map above Nicholas Farm is shown upper left, with Wykes farm (on the other side of Edens Lane) to its right. What I believe to have been “Fishers Lodge” is above the left-hand end of the big orchard, under the caption ‘Fishers’. I have added some captions in modern **Arial** type to identify Edens Lane, Pipers Highway and some of the fields or closes belonging to the Fishers estate.

The Parliamentary Inclosure map of 1807 shows the land originally allocated to Mary Brown as being mainly to the south of Piper’s Highway, surrounding the area of where the mansion is presumed to have stood, though there is also one field to the north of Piper’s Highway. Rayner’s Close, mentioned earlier, was some distance away, quite close to where Emmaus Village now stands. I think it covers more or less the same area now (about 4½ acres) as it did in the early 19th century, and at present it is still pasture land, although it has quite possibly been used for other purposes in the interim. A late 19th century Ordnance Survey map (see above) shows the presence of an extensive orchard in the Fishers area.

But where, exactly, was the mansion itself? The map shows the farmhouse which stood until the 1940s. By that time it was so decrepit that it had to be

demolished. Its replacement, a modest bungalow dating from 1949, has recently been heavily modified. The earlier farmhouse was a three-bay building which does not fit my idea of a 'mansion' – I think that is the building that was referred to in Victorian censuses as 'Fishers Lodge'. But could 'Piper's Lodge', also shown on the map, be a remnant of the mansion?

Somehow that does not seem very likely either. I don't know who 'Piper' was, but I see no reason why his name should be associated with the remains of the mansion.

I believe that the original Fishers house was probably part of the larger complex shown in the orchard area. If that is so it must have been demolished during the 19th century to leave just the barns, which have recently been converted into a private dwelling. Being ancient it may well have been in bad repair, and the fact that the land associated with its former grandeur had been parcelled out to a variety of new owners probably meant that nobody was motivated to take responsibility for its upkeep. This would have been more so after the family of William Brown left Carlton in 1824 and went to farm on a larger scale in Farndish, but I have found no indication of when the demolition actually occurred.

The descendants of John Bunyan mentioned in this article, are summarised above. The children of William Brown of Carlton are still, according to the best authorities, the only accredited descendants of Bunyan in the 18th and 19th centuries, and, at one time, Carlton and Chellington held a higher concentration of them than anywhere else in the world! No less than 17 of them were born in the parish during the period 1781–1823.

On the right-hand side of the table below I show where the children of the third generation were born, if other than Carlton. I have not so far found death records for many of these people, but I give some indication of numbers of children born in the fourth generation where I have been able to find them. The entire Benbrook family emigrated to the USA, of course. I can't access US birth records, but imagine there must consequently be a good many Bunyan descendants there. As yet I have not been able to confirm Dr Brown's assertion that Jane Davison of Turvey emigrated to Canada, but it is quite possible that there are more of them in that country.

THREE GENERATIONS OF BUNYAN DESCENDANTS

William Brown (1754–1800)

Mary ????? (1753–1842)

William Brown (1781–1848)

Sarah Benbrook (1785–18??)

William Brown (1811–1???)

Charles Brown (1812–1???)

Mary Brown (1815-1???)
George Brown (1817-1???)
Richard Brown (1818-1???)
Sarah Brown (1820-1???)
Thomas Brown (1823-1???) Farndish
 John Brown (1825-1???) ditto
 Stephen Brown (1829-1916) +1 ditto
 Henry Brown (1831-1???) +5 ditto
Frances Brown (1783-1855)
William Johnson (1775-1850)
William Johnson (1814-1???)
John Bunyan Johnson (1816-1847)
Mary Ann Johnson (1817-1???) +2
Maria Johnson (1819-1869) +3
Jane Johnson (1819-1901)
Sarah Brown (1786-1868)
Stephen Benbrook (1781-1847)
 William Benbrook (1807-1898) +1 Pitsford, Northants
 Mary Benbrook (1809-1893) ditto
 Floretta Benbrook (1813-1895) ditto
 Betsey Benbrook (1815-1897) ditto
 Richard Benbrook (1818-1863) +1 ditto
 Charles Benbrook (1821-1???) ditto
 Henry Benbrook (1826-1???) ditto
 Sarah Benbrook (1824-1???) ditto
 Stephen Benbrook (1829-1???) ditto
Mary Brown (1789-1845)
William Davison (1757-1844)
 William Davison (1813-1848) Turvey
 John Davison (1821-1845) ditto
 Thomas Davison (1821-1849) ditto
 Elizabeth Davison (1825-1856) +3 ditto
 Jane Davison (1828-1???) + 1 ditto
Elizabeth Brown (1792-18???)
John Norman [no known children]

Notes:

Successive generations are progressively indented.

All of the above are Bunyan descendants except the spouses shown in *italics*.

The 17 Bunyan descendants shown in **bold** type were all born in Carlton or Chellington.

Some birth dates are approximate;

A plus symbol signifies that the indicated person gave rise to further Bunyan descendants, and gives the number of their known children.

Mike Pratt

—

Bunyan's Bedford

It is still possible to find in Bedford sites that relate to John Bunyan or were known to him.

St Paul's Square

In St Paul's Square, where the road bends into Horne Lane, stood the ancient Chapel of Herne, an early religious establishment which was used for the trial of John Bunyan at the Quarter Sessions in January 1661. In St Paul's Square towards the High Street is the magnificent edifice of St Paul's Church. Opposite the church, hidden behind the stone façade of the Old Town Hall, stands the first Bedford Grammar School endowed by Sir William Harpur, which would have been known to Bunyan but not attended by him.

St Paul's Church

The oldest remaining part of the church is the 13th-century Porchway with the Priest's Room above. This is known as the South Porch but is now closed and used as the church office. John Bunyan would have known St Paul's Church well. In 1640 when he was only 12, the then vicar was in trouble for allowing some of his congregation to receive communion without coming up to the altar rail, and Bunyan himself preached here on 23 May 1656.

St John's Hospital

In St John's Street is the St John's Hospital building and, next door, St John the Baptist Church.

It is thought that the first hospital was founded on this site around 1180 but formal reference to it cannot be found until 1216. It was not a hospital as currently understood but a place where 'needy freeborn men, who had become poor by misfortune rather than fault, could be looked after and cared for'. They were to live a religious life with a common refectory and dormitory. When the Hospital was finally closed (around 1653) the building became the rectory for St John's Church and an early occupant was John Gifford, the vicar of St John's, who became Bunyan's great mentor. This building is thought to be the Interpreters' House in *Pilgrims Progress*: 'Then he went on till he came at the House of the Interpreter.'

Bunyan says that during one of his periods of confusion he 'sat under the Ministry of Mr Gifford whose doctrine by God's grace was much for my stability'.

The building is currently the headquarters of the County Branch of the St John Ambulance and is not generally open to the public although special access can be arranged by contacting the office of the organisation. There are

Tudor paintings on the ceiling beams and some original stonework. There is a blue heritage plaque on the car park frontage of the building.

Church of St John the Baptist

Next door to the Hospital is the church of St John the Baptist. It has not always been a Parish Church but rather the private chapel of the Hospital, becoming a public church in the time of Mr Gifford's ministry. It was he who took the church out of what was effectively state control and established an 'independent' church congregation here.

At this time there was a clear view from St John's right across the open fields to Elstow where Bunyan lived. He would have made the journey into Bedford passing St John's many times and it was on one of these visits that he overheard three ladies outside the church praising John Gifford. He was very interested and determined to learn more. Over the following years Bunyan became a regular visitor either to the church or the rectory eventually being 'born again', baptised for a second time, and becoming a preacher himself.

Chethams

In Cardington Road (previously known as Potter Street) the second road on the left is called 'Chethams'. There is a large white house on one corner (this was the family home of John Wing of whom you will hear more later).

Bunyan's Baptismal Pool

Along Chethams in the direction of the river, past the rear entrance to Bedford Girls School, you come to the river bank. On the right hidden by a stone wall is a small inlet, part of the river. Now it is bricked and enclosed but in the time of John Bunyan this would have been open fields, possibly even a drinking place for the animals grazing nearby. However, it was here that a joyous procession from St John's Church witnessed the baptism of Bunyan by John Gifford sometime around 1653. Unlike the infant baptism that Bunyan had undergone at Elstow Church, this would have been by total immersion in the river which we assume must have been much cleaner in those times. There is a blue plaque on the wall opposite commemorating this event and indicating that this is Bunyan's Baptismal Pool.

Bunyan's vision of the City of God

From the river bank, looking towards the Town Bridge and across to the Swan Hotel to the town of Bedford, some say that Bunyan had his vision of the City of God in *Pilgrims Progress*. More recently, however, academics have

argued that this is not so, and that Bunyan always had in his mind London with its many city gates, as the location of his Celestial City.

The Town Bridge

From the Bedford Rowing Club there is a fine view of the stone-built Town Bridge. Across the river you can also see the picturesque Swan Hotel. The present Town Bridge was designed in the classic style by John Wing (who lived in the big white house on the corner of Chethams). Wing, who had also been mayor, was responsible for many other public buildings in the town. The bridge was opened in 1813 to replace an earlier stone bridge that at one time had upon it both a chapel and a lock-up. These were both removed in 1765 before the ultimate demolition of the whole bridge in 1811.

Until fairly recent times it had been thought that it was this lock-up in which John Bunyan spent his various spells in custody. However, Bunyan scholars argue that the lock-up on the bridge (roughly where the third pier of the bridge now is) was actually the town prison, purely for the custody of petty criminals, drunks and minor miscreants. Bunyan was, of course, considered to be a serious offender, one who had refused to follow the law of the land and who thus had disobeyed the King. It is unlikely that such a heinous offender would have been kept in a low status prison but would rather have been incarcerated in the state prison, i.e., the County Gaol.

Over the bridge, on the north-facing end wall you will see a bronze plaque indicating that John Bunyan spent some time in custody in the prison on the bridge. Although he may have been forced to spend odd days here between court sessions it is now unlikely that this plaque is correct.

The Swan Hotel

Across the road on the corner is a restaurant – this was the site of the former ancient Swan Inn where, in August 1661, Bunyan's wife Elizabeth pleaded (without success), with the assize judges and justices for the release of her beloved husband.

The present Swan Hotel replaced the earlier building in a slightly different location. It was designed by the architect Henry Holland on behalf of the Duke of Bedford and opened in 1794. In the Hotel is the staircase removed from Houghton House high on the hill overlooking Ampthill. This was almost certainly 'House or Palace Beautiful', in *Pilgrims Progress*. Bunyan would have seen the property many, many times during his travels across the county and may have even worked in it: 'he lift up his eyes, and behold there was a very stately palace before him, the name whereof was Beautiful'.

Bedford Castle

Past the Swan along the Embankment is the site of Bedford Castle. The castle itself has long disappeared, demolished after the siege of 1224 and the site was left derelict, but it would have been familiar to Bunyan especially after he moved into town and lived so close. The top of the mound had been used for local merriment until Cromwell's army established a small billet here during 1644 and 1645.

On the left of the mound towards the red-brick building, there is a model showing how Bedford Castle would have appeared based on the most recent archaeology.

Bunyan Museum

Nearby is a large white mansion house, once the home of the Higgins family and now the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum. To the right of the house and out of the castle site onto Castle Lane/Road, on the left, opposite St Cuthbert's Church, is the Bunyan Museum, part of the Bunyan Meeting Church.

This museum, which was opened in 1998, has a number of Bunyan's own artefacts including his will, anvil, a wooden flute made by him from a chair leg, an iron violin, and a door from the old Bedford gaol. It also has a number of displays and dioramas in connection with life in Bedford during the 17th century and a superb collection of many editions of *Pilgrims Progress*.

Past the entrance to the museum and on the left there is the end wall of John Howard's house built in the grounds of the Bunyan Meeting when Howard, the great prison reformer, was actually a member of the congregation. You then come to the Bunyan Meeting Church.

Bunyan Meeting Church

The church was founded in 1650 and moved to this site, then an orchard and barn purchased by John Bunyan and his congregation, in 1672. The first purpose-built church was erected in 1707 and replaced by the present building in 1850. The church still uses the original communion table that the first congregation used in the barn. There are stained glass windows depicting scenes from Bunyan's life.

At the front of the building are the fabulous Bronze Doors modelled on similar doors at the Baptistery in Florence. These doors were made by the sculptor Frederick Thrupp as an exhibit for the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1868. They were seen at the Exhibition by the 9th Duke of Bedford who wanted to donate them to the church. The Deacons of the time were concerned about the well-being and maintenance of the doors and the

effects of bad weather on the bronze and so in 1876 the Duke presented them to the church and paid for a new porch to be erected to protect them from the elements.

Site of Bunyan's cottage

In St Cuthbert's Street, on the right is The Ship public-house believed to contain some stonework from the castle, and then a row of cottages. On the last but one of these, there is a blue plaque which states that John Bunyan and his family once lived in a cottage on this site.

When Bunyan moved with his wife Elizabeth and children Mary and Elizabeth from Elstow to Bedford in 1655, it was here in St Cuthbert's Street that he set up home and it was here that two more children John and Thomas were born. Their blind daughter Mary left here to walk to visit her father in gaol every day, taking him food and collecting jacket laces which he had made for sale to eke out some sort of income for the family.

When the cottage was demolished in 1838, Bunyan's will was discovered hidden in the chimney breast. It was dated 23. December 1685 when Charles II had died and James II had inherited the throne and a new spate of religious persecution had broken out with many nonconformist ministers being returned to prison. Bunyan himself fearing another spell under lock and key obviously felt it wise to get his affairs in order to prevent possible sequestration of his property by the state.

St Peter's Green

The Green, much larger then, would have been known to Bunyan. Here was held the hiring fair, when the agricultural workers offered themselves for employment for the next year, the annual wool fair and the militia roll was called when soldiers were required to return to the army. At the back of the Green is the ancient church of St Peter de Merton, with its Saxon tower and important Norman door arch.

Statue of Bunyan

At the junction of St. Peter's Street with three other roads stands the famous statue of Bunyan by Sir Joseph Boehm, reputed to have been Queen Victoria's favourite sculptor. Cast from bronze recovered from cannons captured during the Chinese Opium Wars, the statue, erected in 1874, is over 9 feet tall and on the front and sides of the plinth are depictions of scenes from *Pilgrims Progress*. The site, at the junction of four main roads, was deliberately chosen to illustrate that Bunyan had himself to make a decision as to which direction his life should take. He stands with his hand on the

Bible seeking guidance and has around his foot a broken fetter, representing his imprisonment.

Site of the County Gaol

On the High Street, there are two large stainless-steel silhouettes. From a point in front and facing them look to the floor slightly to the right and you will see in the footway a large green plaque. This marks the site of the County Gaol until it was demolished in 1801.

It is now believed that it was here that Bunyan served his prison sentences and, using his memory of places in Bedfordshire that he knew well, wrote *Pilgrims Progress*. Bunyan was only 32 when he was brought here, just five minutes from his home. At first it was thought that the sentence would last only a few weeks but as the months went by no release was forthcoming and he remained here from 1660 to 1672, returning again for a shorter period from 1673 to June 1677. *Pilgrims Progress* was published on 18 February 1678.

Trevor Stewart

Society Bookshelf

Books published by our history societies: contact the Editor for your Society's books to be included

Bedford History Timeline, by Alan Crawley and Bob Ricketts Published by Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society. 2019, Paperback, 94pp, 119 illustrations. Price £8, from the Eagle Bookshop, 103 Castle Road, Bedford MK40 3QP or £10 incl postage from Bob Ricketts, 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP.

Beats, Boots and Thieves – A History of Policing in North Bedfordshire, By Des Hoar and Richard Handscomb. Sharnbrook Local History Group. 2013. Paperback, 146 pp, £10 from 24 Loring Road, Sharnbrook, Bedford MK44 1JZ.

Colmworth and Neighbouring Villages: Then and Now, by Colmworth and Neighbours History Society. 2018. Paperback, 46pp, 100+ illustrations, £5 + £2 postage from Dave Jarrett, 3 Collingwood Road, Eaton Socon, PE19 8JQ

Henry John Sylvester Stannard with notes on his daughter Theresa Sylvester Stannard, by Richard Morgan. Published by Bedfordshire Local History Association, 2018. 48pp incl index. Available via the BLHA website <http://www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk>, £5 + p&p.

Langford Then and Now 2006. Published by Langford & District History Society, 2006. Paperback, 40 pp, 80+ photos, £4 from Rowena Wolfe by phone or email: 01767 312556 or rowena.wolfe@btinternet.com.

Langford through the Lens Volume 1. Published by Langford & District History Society, reprinted with amendments 2014. Paperback, 74 pp, 70 photos, £5, from Rowena Wolfe by phone or email: 01767 312556 or rowena.wolfe@btinternet.com.

Langford through the Lens, Volume 2. Published by Langford & District History Society. 1992. Paperback, 80 pp, 80+ photos, £3, from Rowena Wolfe by phone or email: 01767 312556 or rowena.wolfe@btinternet.com.

Willington in the First World War by Robert Bollington. Published by Gostwick Press. 2018.. 2018 96pp, £6 from Willington Local History Group (cheque to be payable to them) c/o Rob Bollington, 2 Beauchamp Place, Willington MK44 3QA.

Notes from the *Bedford Times*

As a manufacturing and industrious people, the inhabitants of Bedfordshire stood immeasurably low in public as well as private estimation. In 1600 Dr Fuller speaks of them [in Fuller's *Worthies* p 114]: 'Fat folke (whose collops stick to their sides) are generally lasie whilst leaner people are of more activity. Thus fruitful counties (as this is for the generality thereof) take to themselves a "writ of ease", the principall cause why Bedford-shire affords not any trades peculiar to itself.'

We trust that the natives in the present day may be ranked higher than the quaint doctor chose to place them in his time. 29 Nov 1845, p 3, col 1.

A correspondent informs us that on Wednesday a confectioner of Bedford left his horse and cart standing at the door of a public house in Sandy, a lad belonging to the house took off the bridle in order to let the animal feed more conveniently, when the animal took fright . . . and overturned the cart, which received considerable damage and literally paved the streets with biscuits, suckers and sweet meats for which a general scramble amongst the boys, forthwith ensued and who are still nightly engaged at the street corners in eloquently discussing this, to them, glorious incident. 18 Apr 1846, p 3, col 3, Sandy.

A few days ago a tureen of soup disappeared from the premises of Mr Williamson, the clerk to the Justices, in a somewhat mysterious manner. The cook prepared a quantity of rich soup and set it on the pump to cool down. Directly afterwards a policeman brought a vagrant into the yard to be examined. They noticed the smoking bowl, and the prisoner, being very cold and hungry thought he might be allowed to taste a little of the 'pot liquor'. The policeman saw no objection, and the man forthwith 'licked the platter clean'. The astonishment of both may be imagined when they learned from the angry cook that they had actually cheated the lawyer out of his own dinner and that too within the very portals of Justice. 10 Apr 1847, p 3 col 4.

Sarah Summerlin of Stagsden . . . 'had lodgings . . . for a nominal rent, that of threading her needle'. 1 May 1847, p 3, col 2.

A range of houses in George Street, consisting [of] a fine specimen of old English architecture, has just fallen before the mason's hammer, to make

room for a modern warehouse. Middle-aged people now give up hopes of seeing a clean town, on account of the constant trade in bricks and mortar, which is not likely to cease in their time. The late high wind had carried much brick-rubbish into the eyes of Lutonians [sic] and caused much inconvenience. 1 May 1847, p 3, col.4, Luton.

It is worthy of mention . . . that at the present time there is not a single prisoner in the Gaol, charged with offending against the Game Laws, a circumstance not known in the corresponding period of any year since the prison was built. 14 Aug 1847, p 3, col 2

Submitted by and with thanks to Alan Hunter

VE Day Memories



Happy children after a street party in South Chingford, then in Essex but now in Greater London. In spite of wartime privations the children look well fed and clothed. I have used my own archive for these items, but I would be happy to publish any reminiscences or photos you care to send me to mark this 75th anniversary year. The recently published *Bedford Diary of Leah Aynsley 1943-1946* (see HIB 8.10, p 21) contains a photo of a street party in Honey Hill Road, Bedford, and her descriptions of victory celebrations at pages 124, 125, 136 and 137.

Editor