

# HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

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## Notes and news

**BLHA Hon Secretary.** Expressions of interest are invited for the post of BLHA Hon Secretary which will become vacant at the forthcoming AGM on 11 June 2011. These should be in writing and be addressed to the Chairman or Secretary or to any BLHA Committee member and may be forwarded via the Editor (see p. 4).

**Calendar of Events 2011.** BLHA is compiling a calendar of *all* affiliated societies' meetings and other local history events to be updated monthly on the website, circulated to the Yahoo group and other interested parties. Programmes by e-mail to [ed.martin39@btinternet.com](mailto:ed.martin39@btinternet.com) or to the editor (p. 4).

**Photographic bequest.** Langford History Society has received the archive of local photographer, the late Malcolm Handscombe. It is being sorted and other local societies will be involved in decisions made as to storage, etc.

**The 2nd Bedfords in France and Flanders 1914–1918.** A discount of 25% is available on the published price of this history by Martin Deacon of BLARS about a Bedfordshire regular unit which served at Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Loos and the Somme, among other Great War battles (see p. 4). This brings the price to £18.75. To place an order, the offer code (below) must be quoted to obtain the discount. Phone 01394 610600, or order on-line by going to:

[www.boydellandbrewer.com](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com)

Postage: £3 UK; offer code: 10260; offer ends: 31 March 2011.

**Bedford Museum** closed in mid-October 2010 and will not reopen until redevelopment planned for it and the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery is complete in 2012. Bedford Gallery will be open.

## Murder in Blackgrove Wood, Tilsworth, 1821

Malcolm Handscombe (Notes and News, above) photographed a tombstone and a print was found in his collection but no note of the location. Search on the internet brought to light the following sad tale. The stone is in Tilsworth churchyard and dedicated to the memory of an unknown female found murdered on 15 August 1821 in Blackgrove Wood

## BLHA Annual Conference 2011 and AGM

AT WILLINGTON

Saturday, 11 June 2011

Registration 9 am

AGM 9.30 am

Conference 10 am to 4 pm

The 2011 Bedfordshire Local History Association Conference will be held on Saturday, 11 June 2011 at Willington, hosted by the **Willington Local History Group**. Registration will commence at 9 am at St Lawrence church followed by the AGM of the Association at 9.30 am. The Conference will commence at 10 am.

No charge will be made for those who only wish to attend the AGM. The Conference will finish at 4pm. Lunch and refreshments are included in the Conference fee.

The theme for the day will be 'Willington from Gostwick to Godber' and it will provide an opportunity through talks and a tour to find out more about Willington, its buildings and its history. You will hear about several prominent former residents: Sir John Gostwick, who rose to prominence in the court of Henry VIII; Augustus Orlebar, vicar of Willington for over 50 years; and Isaac Godber, who set up a well-known nursery business at the start of the 20th century. There will be a chance to explore the Tudor dovecote and stables and the church with members of the local history group and to learn more about the work of the Willington group and be a time to share ideas between the groups attending.

**Cost for the day including drinks and lunch: £17;** free parking, details to come. Closing date for applications, Saturday, 24 April. Send cheques payable to Willington Local History Group, together with your contact details, to Mr R Bollington, 2 Beauchamp Place, Willington, Beds MK44 3QA.

with her 'throat cut from ear to ear'. Her murderer was never convicted and her identity never found. *Bedfordshire Notes and Queries*, Vol. 1, 1886, states:

'In the churchyard is a stone with the following remarkable inscription. It is an object of curiosity to all visitors, and probably has been frequently copied, though I have never yet seen it in print. 'Master' Horne, the old parish clerk, told me that he was one of the first, if not the first, to discover the body of this unfortunate woman, whose identity has never to this day been discovered; nor was the murderer ever discovered. It appears that the murderer and his victim were seen to walk in the direction of Blackgrove Wood, which is within sight of Tilsworth Church. I have been told, however, that a man named Evestaffe confessed to the murder on his death bed. He had been tried I believe, on suspicion, but there being no evidence to convict, he was acquitted.'

'This stone was erected  
by subscription  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
A FEMALE UNKNOWN  
found murder'd in Blackgrove wood  
AUG 15 1821.

Oh pause my friends & drop a silent tear,  
Attend & learn why I was buried here:  
Perchance some distant earth had hid my clay,  
If I'd outliv'd the sad, the fatal day.  
To you unknown, my case not understood  
From whence I came, or why in Blackgrove Wood.  
This truth's too clear & nearly all that's known  
I there was murder'd, and the villain's flown.  
May God, whose piercing eye persues his flight,  
Pardon the crime, but bring the deed to light.'

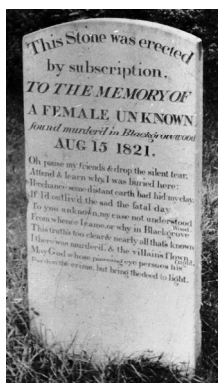


Photo: Malcolm Handscombe Collection

## Benjamin Rhodes of Ampthill c 1610–57: Part 1

We know quite a bit about Benjamin Rhodes, thanks to three main pieces of evidence: his memorial slab, formerly in the entrance to the Elgin vault at Maulden; his brush with Hugh Reeve, Rector of Ampthill; and a work of piety by the Rev Peter Samwaies called:

'The Wise and Faithful Steward or A NARRATION of the Exemplary Death of Mr Benjamin Rhodes, Steward to the Right Honourable Thomas Earl of Elgin, &c BRIEFLY Touch'd in a Funeral Sermon, and since enlarged Together With some Remarkable Passages concerning Mrs Anne Rhodes his wife, who dying a few hours after him, was buried together in the same grave with him in Malden Church in Bedfordshire, Aug 4th 1657, Printed by William Godbid, London 1657.'

### Ancestors

From the memorial slab, we learn that Rhodes was 'descended of the family of Rhodes of Rode in

Herefordshire'. On his engraved portrait there is a coat of arms 'or two trefoils slipped azure, a chief gules'. Papworth's *Ordinary of British Armorial* gives, for various combinations of two trefoils and a chief, arms of families of Rodd or Rode – for example, the Barony of Rennell, surname Rodd (argent two trefoils slipped sable, on a chief of the second three crescents of the first), and Rodd of Crapstone House, Devon (argent in a chief two trefoils slipped azure, on a chief of the second three mullets or).

All these families claim descent from 'Rodds known to have been settled in The Rodd, Co Hereford, in the 13th century'. An affidavit in BLARS (LL11/1–3 sworn by Hugh Collyer, 'shoemaker of Presteane' [Presteigne]) is endorsed by Samuel Rhodes of Flitwick as 'information to my grandfather March 15 1608 concerning his kindred then of the house of Rode', and lists the seven sons of Hugh Rode of Rode, Herefordshire, who flourished 1559–97 and died in 1602. Samuel Rhodes further describes him as 'Hugh Rode unto whom my greate grandfather was uncle' and adds that 'My Greate Grandfather was eldest son to his own father and heir to y<sup>e</sup> house of Rode'.

Hugh had at least two uncles: Edward *fl* 1559–97 and Walter *d* 1603. Unfortunately the latter who had sons was also illegitimate and therefore his descendants can hardly have been 'heir to y<sup>e</sup> house of Rode'. I can find nothing about Edward's descendants, if any.

### Career, marriage and children

From his Marriage Licence Allegation we learn that Benjamin Rhodes was born about 1610. Samwaies says he was proficient in Latin, French and music, and was originally with the 18th Earl of Oxford in The Netherlands – this would be 1624–25, in which latter year the 18th Earl died there. He then served the Earl's widowed Countess for some years and joined the household of the 1st Earl of Elgin from 1629, when the latter married the Countess of Oxford. He remained in the service of Lord Elgin and his Countess till his own death in 1657.

The King appointed Lord Elgin as Steward of the Honour of Ampthill in about 1613. Mr Andrew Underwood in his excellent *17th Century Ampthill and Hugh Reeve* suggests that Lord Elgin lived at Great Lodge in Ampthill Park to discharge his duties. That may be so, but he purchased Houghton House from the Earl of Pembroke in 1623. This was a chance of acquiring the finest house in Bedfordshire – some might say, in England – and moreover a house within the Honour of Ampthill. Elgin took it, no doubt expecting to spend more time at his Stewardship.

Rhodes as we have seen entered Elgin's service in 1629, though when he came to Ampthill is not clear. Rhodes was living in London in 1638/9 when a Marriage Licence Allegation was issued on behalf of the Bishop of London on 25 January 1638/9, the marriage itself taking place at St Clement Danes four days later.

Rhodes' wife, Ann Glover, was, according to her memorial, 'of the family of Glovers in Hertfordshire' with arms shown there of 'sable a fess ermine between

3 crescents argent'. Samwaies adds: 'and at 2 distance Niece to that pious *Glover* in *Queen Maries* days, who *ennobled* his lineage not by receiving the blood of others, but losing his own for the testimony of the truth.' This seems to refer to the Protestant martyr Robert Glover, burnt at the stake in Coventry on 20 September 1555. Robert's connections seem to be mostly with Warwickshire and in the inquisition taken after his death he is described as late of Newhouse Grange, Leicestershire. His precise relationship to Ann seems to be irrecoverable.

Ann Rhodes was born in about 1615 according to the Marriage Allegation and acted as 'gentlewoman to her Lady' – i.e., the Countess of Elgin and Oxford. One of Benjamin and Ann's children was a Diana – no doubt a graceful reference to their employer. We do not know when Ann started to work in the Elgin household and whether it antedated her marriage to Benjamin in 1638/9.

Their children were baptised in Clerkenwell (where was the Elgins London house): Richard on 27 December 1640, Benjamin on 6 December 1641, Samuel on 3 April 1644 and Diana on 8 March 1644/5. (Samuel was later owner of Flitwick Manor on his marriage with Jane Blofeild, widow of the previous owner – Marriage Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Vicar-General, 19 November 1668.)

From these baptisms it seems Benjamin kept his house in Clerkenwell in the 1640s, and it is certainly the case that no children of Benjamin were baptised in Ampthill. Ann probably remained in Clerkenwell with the children, while Benjamin discharged duties in Ampthill, for he claimed to be there for the petition against Hugh Reeve on 23 February 1640/41.



Beds & Luton Archives Service, LL18/56

So far as Rhodes' physical appearance is concerned, there is an engraving of him (BLARS LL18/56), clearly identified by the inscription 'Effigies Benjamin Rhodes'. I suspect Rhodes' proficiency in Latin would have caused him to wince at the idea that the Latin for 'Benjamin' was 'Benjamus'! Perhaps it was done after his death. The portrait is of a middle-aged man, with a round, slightly fat face. His

Vandyke beard and moustache and his hair are all meticulously arranged, and his dress though plain is surmounted by a fine lace collar.

RICHARD MORGAN

(To be continued.)

## Stayesmore Manor, Carlton: Part 2

### The 20th Century

After the purchase of Stayesmore Manor in 1831 by Thomas Lord Grantham, its ownership migrated through various family relationships to Lord Lucas, who inherited it with other estates from the Earl Cowper. This was the situation at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1910, much of the land in Carlton was owned by Lord Lucas, and most of it was farmed by William Bland Battams. However, major changes in ownership occurred shortly after that time. In 1913 the Lucas family sold its estates in Carlton, Harrold and Turvey, including land associated with Stayesmore Manor and the former Carlton Hall Manor, which were purchased by Bedfordshire County Council. The Carlton land was subsequently split up into Council smallholdings. All this happened during the final years of the Battams' occupation of Stayesmore Manor.

The unmarried Reginald William Battams died in 1925, and the next occupant of the manor house was **William Fairey**, originally from Harrold, who farmed a large acreage in the locality of Carlton and Harrold. He and his family lived at Stayesmore Manor until the 1930s, when they moved to live in Chellington House at the other end of the village. During their tenancy, Stayesmore Manor was one of the first houses in Carlton to have electricity installed.

William Fairey was born in 1860 at Dungee Farm, Harrold, the elder of two sons of **John Fairey** (1830–1913) and his wife **Maria**, née **Feazey**, a daughter of a Wilden family of farmers and butchers. In 1885 William married **Louisa Sophia Medlow**, a daughter of a family that originated in Cambridgeshire but came to farm at Hill Farm, Chellington, in the 1880s. William and Louisa had three daughters: **Mabel**, **Edith** and **Elsie**; only the last-named of them married. William died in 1950 at the age of 90, and his land in Carlton is now farmed by his great-grandson **Peter Mesney**.

The Faireys were succeeded at Stayesmore Manor by **Grenville Arthur Battcock**. He was born in 1882 in Maidenhead, Berkshire, was privately educated, and trained as a solicitor. He then came to Bedford to start up in practice. In 1912 he married **Margaret Peake**, in St Albans. She was a year younger than her husband, and born in Walsall. They had three children, a son, **Whalley Battcock**, born in 1913 in the Bedford area, and twin daughters, **Hester** and **Margaret**, born in 1914 in St Albans (probably at the home of Mrs Battcock's parents). Margaret died shortly after her birth, but Hester survived, and is remembered as 'Miss Battcock' by older inhabitants of Carlton; she played an active role in the Women's

Institute. During the First World War. Grenville Battcock served with the Royal Berkshire Regiment in France, being discharged with the rank of Major. After the war he returned to Bedford to continue practising as a solicitor; in the 1920s he was living in Kimbolton Avenue. He moved to Stayesmore Manor after the Faireys left (his telephone number there in 1939 was Harrold 254!). During the Second World War Grenville Battcock was a Colonel in the Local Defence Volunteers (Home Guard), associated initially with the 1st Bedfordshire Battalion, and later the 5th Battalion. Colonel and Mrs Battcock lived at Stayesmore Manor from the 1930s until the late 1950s. They contributed a great deal to village life, and regularly made their garden available for village garden parties and other entertainments. After the end of the Second World War, Colonel Battcock purchased the plot of Council land on which the former village Recreation Hut stood, and presented it to the Parish Council for the benefit of the village.

In the late 1950s the Battcocks left Stayesmore Manor and went to live in Eversholt. Quite by accident, I recently found an obituary [*The Bedfordshire Naturalist 1964* (Beds Natural History Society, 1966)]: 'In November [1964], Col G A Battcock of Witt's End, Eversholt, and formerly of Stayesmore Manor, Carlton, a member since 1951.' I have been unable to find any information about the death his wife Margaret, or about their son and surviving daughter.

After the Battcocks left Stayesmore Manor in the late 1950s, the house and some associated land and farm buildings were sold by its owners, the Bedfordshire County Council. Two potential buyers were a family named Smith, who wanted the house as a nursing home, and Walter Howe, a Carlton smallholder, who was interested in the farmyard and farm buildings, adjacent to the manor house and across the road from where he lived. The Smiths were the successful purchasers. Carlton inhabitant Stan Smith (no relation) recalls that they paid £4,000 for it at auction. Part of the property was subsequently sold to Walter Howe, who then owned the farmyard, barns, etc.

Reginald Smith, a physiotherapist at Bedford Hospital, and his wife Betty, a nurse, ran the nursing home. It was successful and the Smiths wanted to extend it to take on more patients. They sought planning permission to enlarge the manor house and to erect a bungalow in the walled vegetable garden. All their applications were turned down on the grounds that the village sewer system was already overloaded, which was probably true at the time. Ironically, planning permission was later given for the Manor Close estate in Carlton, on the land acquired by Walter Howe for his farmyard!

After they retired the Smiths moved to the East Coast and Stayesmore Manor became a private house. For more than 20 years it was in the ownership of the Ellerys, who still live in Carlton. It changed hands again a few years ago, and its present owner is restoring the building to a very high standard.

If any reader has further relevant knowledge or recollections I will be very glad to hear from them, so that I can add to the history of Stayesmore Manor.

## Sources

For earlier years: *The Victoria County History of Bedfordshire* and a summary of the descent of the Carlton manors compiled by BLARS associated with the Lucas Archive (BLARS Reference L3 refers to a large collection of documents, many of them very relevant to this study, which are summarised on the BLARS website). As noted in the latter, there are some misconceptions in the VCHB, and my account in turn differs in minor details from the BLARS summary. Parish registers and memorial inscriptions were additionally consulted. Some of the later material comes from oral recollections, and I am grateful to those who provided them.

MIKE PRATT

## Book review

*The 2nd Bedfords in France and Flanders 1914–1918*, edited by M G Deacon. The Boydell Press for Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF. ISBN 978–0–85155–076–3. xviii + 368pp (incl. 59pp Appendices and 35pp indexes).

Martin Deacon who is Operations Manager at BLARS has edited the official war diary of the 2nd Battalion, the Bedfordshire Regiment, and this volume complements the 2004 book, produced under the same auspices and also edited by him, on the 7th Battalion: *The Shiny Seventh*. As the editor points out, the 7th Battalion was taken into the 2nd Battalion in May 1918 so this carries on their story to the Armistice as well as telling the whole story of the 2nd who were in the fight from the beginning.

Each year of the war has a diary and thus a chapter, except for 1918 and 1919, which are in one diary. Each diary is prefaced by an introduction outlining the year, followed by a note of the main actions involving British troops. Once into the diaries, footnotes amplify and explain the text, including the personalities mentioned.

Martin Deacon has done an excellent editing job and the text is fully supported by appendices of events, battlefield 'drives', explaining the actions in which the Bedfords were involved, selected operational orders, and casualties among other ranks. This last appendix shows that 20.05% of total casualties came from Hertfordshire and 19.68% from Bedfordshire. There are indexes of personal names, place names and organisation names. The plates section includes maps, an intelligence summary, photographs of officers and other ranks and of battle sites. One or two of the battle sites photos are darker than might be expected, but this might be due to weather conditions when they were taken or conversion from colour to monochrome.

The book is well printed and neatly typeset in Times but perhaps more could have been made of the title page where little attempt is made to design an appropriate entry to a very valuable and significant contribution to the history of the Great War.

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TED MARTIN

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