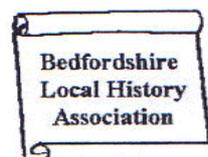


# HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE



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## THE BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Bedfordshire Local History Association was created to promote the advancement of local history within the County. Its membership consists of local history societies, corporate bodies, individuals, and other groups interested in the local history of Bedfordshire. Individual members interested in local studies who have no local society serving their area are particularly welcome. Among the aims of the Association are the following: (a) to promote the study of local history within the County (b) to improve communications between the local societies and the wider historical network (c) to organise County events such as conferences, one-day educational workshops, exhibitions, etc. (d) to provide information and assistance to its membership in furtherance of the study of local history. Such activities are designed to complement and enhance, but not to conflict with, those of member societies.

This newsletter is central to these aims, as it enables us to keep you informed of our events, and enables those interested in Bedfordshire's history to exchange views and news and to publish articles based upon their research. It is hoped that this can become an effective way for you to share the fruits of your research and to learn more about the activities of Bedfordshire-based societies.

Annual membership of the Association is available to individuals (£5.00) or to societies and other bodies (£10.00). For further details, please contact Mrs S Gibbs, BLHA Secretary, 42 Milton Avenue, Eaton Ford, St. Neots, Cambs, PE19 7LE. (Cheques should be made payable to **Bedfordshire Local History Association**).

## 2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Association's Annual Conference in June was hosted this year by Harlington Heritage Trust, and was a great success. Our thanks go to the Trust for all their hard work, which helped make the day an enjoyable one for all those present. The day started with the Association's A.G.M., which was Stephen Coleman's last as Chairman. Stephen has been involved with the Association for many years, and for the last three as Chairman. Also at the A.G.M., Elisabeth Field, our able Secretary, stood down at the end of her term of office. On behalf of the new committee, we would like to express our gratitude to both Stephen and Elisabeth for all their work for the Association.

The current committee is outlined below; however, in order to ensure the smooth running of the Association and the events it organises, we would welcome the opportunity to co-opt those interested in helping us achieve our objectives.

### **BLHA Committee 2005/6**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Society</u></b>
Barry Dackombe	Chairman	Amphill History Forum / Amphill & District Preservation Society
Stella Gibbs	Secretary	Roxton & District Local History Group
Mike Turner	Treasurer	Amphill & District Archaeological & Local History Society
Elizabeth Adey		Luton Museum
John Currie		Friends of Luton Museum
Diana Dalton		Maulden History Society
Rosemary Evans		Clapham History Society
Elisabeth Field		Maulden History Society
Brian Lazelle		Amphill & District Archaeological & Local History Society / Maulden History Society
David Parker		Biggleswade History Society
John Pitts		Toddington History Society
Kevin Ward	<i>ex officio</i>	Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service

## DIGITAL NEWSPAPERS AS A LOCAL HISTORY TOOL

Barry Dackombe

At some time or other as historians, we have all needed or wanted to look something up in the newspapers. As a source they can be invaluable but also extremely time-consuming. No matter how dedicated you are, no-one is immune to the distraction of the little interesting story that catches your eye. Sometimes such distractions can lead to unexpected and more rewarding avenues than your original research. They certainly help relieve the tedium of searching the small print for details of the event or location you set out to find.

*The Times* is the only national paper which has been comprehensively indexed. *Palmer's Index to the Times 1790-1905* and the *Official Index to the Times, 1906-1980*. A simple search of *Palmer's Index* for 'Amphill' produced over 900 results, starting with news of thunderstorms in August 1800, and the opening of the Amphill Bank in January 1818. Instantly any search has been dramatically reduced to the exact editions; in addition, it will tell you exactly which page and column to read. It will, however, still be necessary to consult the microfilm copies at the British Newspaper Library at Colindale in North London. While the use of indexes can be a great help, there are limitations, especially with local newspapers, as these vary in their coverage. However, the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service in Bedford contains some excellent card indexes to Bedfordshire's newspapers.

In recent years, however, major projects to digitise national newspapers have been undertaken. One of these is *The Times Digital Archive 1785-1985*. It is now possible to search through every edition of *The Times* and instantly retrieve full facsimile images of either a specific article or a complete page. The digitisation process has captured the entire newspaper, so as well as the articles, it is possible to search the advertisements and illustrations/photographs.

A simple search again on 'Amphill' this time produced 4861 entries! Admittedly, a lot of the eighteenth and nineteenth century entries relate to stagecoach advertisements. The article on thunderstorms at Amphill indicates that Bedfordshire was experiencing a particularly hot spell, which broke on the evening of 22 August 1800. The resultant thunderstorm ravaged the area, with hailstones of up to 11 inches in circumference. Apparently, Lord Ossory sustained £300 worth of damage, with the loss of nearly every window at Park House.

Obviously, local papers are a much greater source of information for a particular locality. However, as a member of the Bedfordshire Library Service, all this can be accomplished from home, without the need to travel and search through miles of

microfilm. You will need your Library membership number and a Pin number, and access to the internet. All this should be available from your local library. The other advantage of *The Times Digital Archive* is the ability to search 'every single' word published over a 200-year period, and gain instant access to the articles. The success rate is dependant upon the quality of the original, so that tears in the paper will alter the ability to recognise words, but you can of course look at every page, if you wish, too!

Naturally, *The Times* isn't the only national newspaper, and several years ago the British Library undertook a pilot study to digitise certain editions of London's *Daily News*, *The News of the World*, *The Weekly Dispatch*, and *The Manchester Guardian*. This can usually be accessed through [www.uk.olivesoftware.com](http://www.uk.olivesoftware.com), but it can be temperamental and may require several visits. The British Library have also digitised the entire run of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* (1861-1913) and this can be accessed through [www.collectbritain.co.uk](http://www.collectbritain.co.uk). This site also contains copies of the 1830s Ordnance Survey maps of Bedfordshire produced at 2 inches to the mile, a large number of topographical drawings of Bedfordshire buildings, and even samples of local dialect. However, of much greater interest are the British Library's plans to create a digital archive of nearly two million 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper pages. This £2 million project will undergo a pilot scheme during 2005 before its expected public launch in September 2006.

An experimental project conducted by the Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Oxford established the Internet Library of Early Journals (ILEJ). This project digitised substantial runs of the *Annual Register* (1758-78), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1843-63), *The Builder* (1843-52), *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-50), *Notes and Queries* (1849-69) and *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1757-77). These can be accessed free of charge at [www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/).

There are also internet companies that provide digital copies of newspapers; it is necessary to pay a registration fee to use their services. These are predominantly American based and have little coverage of British newspapers. Two sites are [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) and [www.newspaperarchive.com](http://www.newspaperarchive.com); the latter offers 48 hours free subscription.

The use of digital newspapers will never remove the need to carefully scrutinise original or microfilm copies of old newspapers, especially for the regional and local papers. It does, however, offer an additional and very welcome research tool. As with all sources, treat it with care.

### **BLHA AUTUMN WORKSHOP: LOOKING AFTER COMMUNITY ARCHIVES**

The BLHA Autumn Workshop **LOOKING AFTER COMMUNITY ARCHIVES** will be held on Saturday November 5<sup>th</sup> 2005 in the Village Hall, Toddington. The workshop will run from 9.30 am to 4.15 pm. The fee for the day will be £12 which will include a buffet lunch and refreshments. We regret that, due to the limited number of places available, the workshop is open only to BLHA individual members and members of BLHA member organizations. Booking forms are being circulated, and early booking is essential due to the high expected demand. Guidance will be given on what to collect and why, together with guidance on the relationship between the societies' or individual's collections and the role of the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service in the collection, restoration and preservation of records. A substantial part of the day will be spent on how to store, preserve, display and exhibit records effectively. Photographic and electronic media will be dealt with in detail. The effect of current copyright legislation will be briefly reviewed.

### **DISCOVERING THE HISTORY OF YOUR LOCAL LANDSCAPE**

A Cambridge University, Institute of Continuing Education course *DISCOVERING THE HISTORY OF YOUR LOCAL LANDSCAPE* by Dr Sue Oosthuizen, consisting of 10 meetings on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm, will be held in Colmworth, commencing on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2006, fee £60 (£50 concessionary).

This friendly and approachable course introduces students to landscape history in a way which will enable them to use Colmworth as an example and to explore its landscape history, both as a village and as a parish. Students living outside Colmworth will also be able to use their own parishes as study areas if they wish.

Each session will use sources and methods to unravel the history of a particular element within the landscape, and will include the opportunity for students to try out methods and theories for themselves in the landscape history of Colmworth or any other parish they wish to study.

The course will use maps and other documents as well as the features of the landscape itself – including houses and churches, roads, fields and greens, hedges and archaeological monuments – to explore the influence of the physical environment on the use of the land and the development of the landscape.

The field trip, which takes the place of one of the sessions, will be to a site either in Colmworth or within 20 miles, as agreed with the students during the course, depending on their interests. It will take place on a Saturday or Sunday, the date to be agreed among the class.

### **MAULDEN MAUSOLEUM**



The last chance to view the Maulden Mausoleum and its crypt this year will be on Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup>, when it will be open for public viewing from 3 pm to 5 pm. The adjacent Church of St.Mary will also be open, and refreshments will be available.

### **THE RAISING OF THE MARY ROSE**

Bedford Offshore Sailing Group have arranged a talk by Peter Ellement of the Mary Rose Trust, on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30 for 8 pm at The Shakespeare Hotel, Shakespeare Road, Bedford. There will be a small charge to provide a donation to the Trust. The talk will cover the raising, conservation and display of the Mary Rose and her contents, and how these have added to our understanding of life on a Royal Navy ship in Tudor times.

### **BEDFORD HILLS HISTORICAL MUSEUM, NEW YORK STATE**

The Secretary to the Mayor of Bedford, England, has informed us that Mr Branson, the Mayor, has been in contact with the Bedford Hills Historical Museum in Bedford Hills, New York State, USA, who had written to him about the creation of the new museum in the town. The mayor now receives newsletters from the museum and has sent us a copy of the latest edition, asking if they would be of interest to our members. Our Bedford Museum is also believed to have a link with Bedford Hills.

The Bedford Hills Museum is financed by membership fees and donations, and the museum trustees have leased and refurbished the old tax receiver's office from the town. The architect son of their secretary did the design and layout, and local firms and the organizing committee themselves donated materials and labour to complete the museum in time for the grand opening on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Many complimentary remarks were received about the exhibits, which included a 1610 AD map of Bedford, England, showing the English town as it was when the emigrants sailed for America.

The museum is open on Thursdays and Sundays from 11 am to 2 pm, and other times by appointment, and is manned by volunteers.

## ANNE MARY BUCK

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Anne Mary Buck on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005, a valued member of this Association since its formation. Anne Buck came to reside in Maulden, Bedfordshire, on her retirement in 1972 as Keeper of the Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester. It was from her cottage in Maulden that she continued to write scholarly books and articles on the subjects in which she was a world authority, while still finding time to join and take an active part in the Ampthill & District Archaeological & Local History Society, the Ampthill & District Preservation Society, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, and later, on its formation, the Maulden History Society.

She was always willing to assist and share her wide knowledge, giving talks to societies and help and advice to individuals. Many a local historian has beaten a path to her door with a faded old photograph and she has accurately dated the costume and given them succinct facts about it and its period. On her return to Bedfordshire, she reinforced her relationship with Luton Museum by joining the Friends of Luton Museum, where her help and expertise was greatly valued, and she soon became a Vice President.

She was passionate about her community, the preservation of the Green Belt and the environment, and she particularly deplored the urbanisation of her village, taking her objections to planning meeting and enquiries in the last few years of her life.

Anne Mary Buck was born in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1910, where her parents owned a grocery shop. Her father was a compulsive collector of all things to do with Hertfordshire, including stamps, bus tickets, newspapers and much more, all of which were sorted, recorded and carefully stored. She was educated at St Albans High School and London University, from where she graduated in English and History. She worked at the Times Book Club

for six years, and it was during this period that she gained the bibliographical skills that were to stand her in good stead in her later career.

Just before the second world war, Anne Buck had the opportunity to join Luton Museum, where Charles Freeman was Curator, and to learn professional skills in the field where her father was an amateur. When Charles Freeman was called up into the Royal Air Force, it was Anne Buck who took over his duties. School notebooks of the period show that she made a substantial number of visits to schools in the area to talk to the children about the history of the town and its surroundings, including the Roman period. It was at Luton that she became expert on the subject of the history of lace and its manufacture, and similarly the hat-making industry.

In 1947 she took the post of keeper of the newly created Gallery of English Costume at Platt Hall that was based round an extensive collection of costume purchased from Dr Cunningham and his wife by Manchester Art Gallery. Under her leadership, the way that historical items of clothing were preserved, displayed and presented was transformed, and Platt Hall gained a world-wide reputation. Anne Buck's skills had been advanced by her private visits to Sweden, Norway and Denmark, where she took the opportunity to study the Scandinavian techniques and practices of curatorship in her fields of interest. She continued to visit the friends she made in these countries till late in her life.

Anne Buck made a major contribution internationally in raising the standards of museum services as a whole, not just in the field of costume, by her work with the International Committee of Museums, and her chairmanship of the Education Committee of the Museums Association. She was chairman of the Society for Folk Life Studies 1972-75 and a founder member of the Costume Society and its chairman 1974-80.

Anne Buck was made an OBE in 1971.

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