

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

VOLUME 6, NO 9

AUTUMN 2014

www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

In this issue

Notes and news: Eltisley History Society book; Bedford Local History Magazine

My small part in D-day, VIC BRUNT

Rich and poor Bedfordshire clergy in the 18th century: Pt 2,

RICHARD MORGAN

A New Pevsner!; Book Notice, TED MARTIN

Notes and news

Eltisley History Society has produced a hardback A4-book telling the story of their village during the First World War and also of each of the 14 men from the village who died. It costs £15 and copies can be obtained from the Society's secretary, Mary Flinders:

secretary@eltisleyhistorysociety.org.uk, Tel: 01480 880268.

Bedford Local History Magazine. Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society has just launched a new magazine with this title to reach a wider audience than the Society's membership and to provide a vehicle for local researchers to publish articles of interest on Bedford and neighbouring villages. The April issue (strangely numbered 93) contains two articles by the editor, Bob Ricketts, CBE. The first is 'A Tour of Biddenham in 1891, Part 1', and the second, 'A Brief History of Hockliffes, Bookseller'. Alan Crawley contributes 'Mill Street in Earlier Times', and there is a book review section by Bob Ricketts. The October issue will contain articles by Bob Ricketts on the 'Rise and Fall of the Ouse Navigation' and by Stuart Antrobus on the cinema in Bedford plus Part 2 of the Biddenham article: www.baalhs.org.uk

My small part in D-day

[This year marks the 70th Anniversary of D-day and by courtesy of the author and the editor of the Biggleswade History Society's Newsletter we have one man's account of that historic day and its prelude.]

As a youngster growing up in the Second World War I soon developed an interest in all that the Royal Navy was doing, so, as I got near the age of conscription, I decided the Army or the Air Force was not for me and I volunteered for the Navy before my 18th birthday. Going to the RN Recruitment Office at Cambridge I quickly got to know how fussy they were: the chap in front of me was asked if he had ever had a brush with the law and when he admitted a minor misdemeanour they said: 'We don't want your sort in the RN. Go to the Army recruiting office!'

When I was 18 I got my calling up papers and reported for training at HMS *Royal Arthur* at Skegness, a fancy name for what had been Butlin's Holiday Camp. I was put onto training as a wireless tele-

graphist but when the RN realised I had been an apprentice electrician back home they moved me to training as a Junior Probationary Electrical Mechanic (JPEM). This involved being suited out in what the RN called 'fore and aft rig' with peaked cap, navy blue jacket and trousers and white shirt with black tie instead of the traditional sailors' uniform with flared trousers and light blue flap to your jacket. Like a few other trainees I soon made up my mind that there was too much metal work and too little electrics about a JPEM and tried *not* to pass the exam, not realising that that meant you were automatically transferred for training as a Wireman, Landing Craft Tank (LCT). So, now kitted out in traditional uniform, instead of travelling worldwide in a larger ship I was destined to land on hostile beaches in a LCT!

We were taught about LCT electrics at the Government Training Centre at Letchworth and were picked up by RN lorry at Hitchin Rail Station and taken to local civilian billets. I was billeted with a nice friendly couple in William Road, Hitchin, the same road where my married sister lived but, unfortunately, she had no spare room. Being so near home seemed a bonus but it was a case of 'so near, so far'.



Some lively members of our group got into trouble during jaunts to London so the Navy's remedy was to stop our pay until the end of our course, giving us a weekly amount for essentials, not enough for jolly jaunts! I still find it hard to believe our solution to low pay – we got part-time jobs locally via the Labour Exchange (they must have been desperate). So a mate and I ended up at the local gas

works where we had to move a huge pile of coke by shovels, getting very dirty in the process. Unsurprisingly we returned to the Job Centre the next day to say a career in gas was not for us and for the remainder of our stay in Hitchin we scraped through on low pay.

A few weeks' training soon went by and we were dispersed to various locations and a few of us travelled by train to Boston in Lincolnshire to join a flotilla of LCTs that had been built there. We set off the next day down the east coast, stopping overnight in the huge harbour of Harwich and later anchored tantalisingly close to the end of Southend Pier. We practised beach landings near Lowestoft but were humiliated there: when a LCT lands, an anchor is let out on the approach in order to pull the craft off into deeper water. A young midshipman let out our anchor too soon and the whole lot, anchor and its wire went over the stern, so we could not haul ourselves off! A tug came out from Lowestoft and the poor young officer got a reprimand.

We continued our journey through the Straits of Dover to anchor in the Solent between Southampton and the Isle of Wight. After two nights of dragging our anchor due to the very strong tide and having to start our engines to move away from bigger ships, our captain said he would go up the River Medina halfway to Newport, Isle of Wight, for calmer waters. As the water near the riverbanks was too shallow we anchored in the middle of the river and had a rowing boat attached by rope to the craft and the bank so we could go ashore.

Our 'holiday' there soon ended and we went off to pick up some self-propelled guns with their British Army soldiers somewhere in the New Forest. The whole of the British South Coast was swarming with troops brought by 20,000 special trains, with their tanks and lorries destined for the beaches in France. By early June it is estimated that over three million troops of many nationalities were packed into the south of England. During the night of 4 June 1944 we set sail for Normandy, as D-Day was originally planned for 5 June but, as the weather was too rough, it was postponed 24 hours and we turned back to England when halfway across the English Channel.

So we set off again the next night, with aircraft or gliders, carrying parachutists, going over our heads in the same direction carrying 23,000 soldiers. The unsung heroes of this mammoth operation were the men of the minesweepers who cleared a wide 'highway' from the UK to Normandy. The RAF did a magnificent job of keeping most of the Luftwaffe away from the landing areas. The armada of 7,000 ships was a sight to see, consisting of 7 battleships, 23 cruisers, 105 destroyers and frigates, 860 merchant ships and motor torpedo boats, 4,000 Landing Ship Tanks and LCTs, some converted to LCRs (Landing Craft Rockets) with rockets in banks on their tank decks. All headed in one direction – Normandy!

On D Day over 130,000 soldiers and their vehicles were landed, swelling to over 500,000 by the end of June 1944. The self-propelled guns on our craft bombarded the beach before we landed about 7am and battleship shells went whistling over our heads to

knock out the enemy's defences. We let out our anchor as we approached the beach at a village called Le Hamel but, unfortunately, the tide went out before we could come away and we were grounded on the beach until the next tide. Not a good place to be! Unbelievably, when things quietened down a bit with our troops pushing inland some of us silly lads investigated the area and found some cider in an abandoned farmhouse.

After the tide came in we made our way back to England with the first sight being the lighthouse on the south coast of the Isle of Wight. As one of the explosives on sticks standing up on the beaches had damaged our bows (front end) we went into a huge dry dock in Southampton to be repaired. This dock was large enough to accommodate ocean liners like the *Queen Mary* so, instead of climbing up a ramp to our little ship, we had to go down an extremely long ladder to what looked like a toy boat at the bottom of the dock. Discipline in small RN vessels like ours was not as strict as on larger ships so our captain was able to say, 'If half our small crew of twelve care to find their way home for 48 hours, I do not know anything about it if you are picked up.' So six of us set off by rail, carefully avoiding red caps (military police) and my family and friends were astounded to see me in Biggleswade for a short visit only two days after D-Day. When we returned, the other half of the crew went home for their short leave.

As soon as the repairs were done and all our crew was back, we started a shuttle service to France, taking more troops, mostly American, and their tanks and vehicles. I reckon we did 20 or so return trips but, thankfully, during our time in dock, we missed the worst of the stormy weather that partly wrecked the Mulberry Harbour. This was built off the beach at Arromanches from 213 huge concrete structures towed from the UK, together with assorted old ships including Thames pleasure boats and American paddle steamers which were scuttled in the required positions.

VIC BRUNT

Rich and poor Bedfordshire clergy in the 18th century: Pt 2

Rich parishes in Beds

Non-discharged parishes include the richer parishes with an income of more than £50. Willis gives a Certified Value for some non-discharged parishes, taken from Ecton's 1719 book, included in:

*'An Account of such Small Benefices as have been returned to the Governors of the Bounty of Queen ANNE, in Order to receive the Benefit of Augmentation, according to the Rules of the Corporation, with the Improved Yearly Valuations of the same.'*¹⁵

This implies that the richer parishes were actually first in the queue for whatever benefits were to be handed out, as almost all of these were richer non-discharged parishes! Out of 67 non-discharged parishes in Beds, the 20 Certified Values we have are:

Campton	£79 7s 0d
Henlow	£78 19s 2½d
Knotting	£75 5s 0d
Willington	£72 5s 0d
Holcot	£72 4s 0d

Fardish	£66 12s 0d
Melchbourne	£65 7s 0d
Bedford St Peter	£65 1s 1½d
Astwick	£64 3s 5d
Bedford St Mary	£63 12 4¾d
Stondon	£63 5s 11d
Riseley	£60 11s 5d
Millbrook	£60 9s 10d
Bromham	£57 10s 1d
Goldington	£57 6s 8½d
Holywell	£56 1s 2d
Lower Gravenhurst	£53 15s 2½d
Dunstable	£53 0s 0d 'Not in Charge'
Eaton Bray	£48 7s 8d
Wrestlingworth	£48 4s 2d

Discharged parishes should all be less than £50. However, some of them approach – exceed even – the values of some non-discharged parishes in the previous list. The best are:

Eaton Socon	£50 0s 0d
Whipsnade	£49 10s 6d
Souldrop	£48 5s 9d*
Sharnbrook	£46 19s 6d
Chellington	£46 13s 0d
Steppingley	£46 3s 0d
Flitton	£45 5s 0d
Tingrith	£44 15s 0d
Salford	£44 13s 4d
Podington	£43 2s 0d

* United to Knotting: income for both £123 10s 9d.

Poor Parishes in Beds

For poorer parishes we are on safer ground. For a start we have a separate list of parishes which received a grant from the Governors up to 1740. After 1718, the rules required one-third of parishes assisted to be under £10 and two-thirds under £50 pa.¹⁶ No Bedfordshire parish was assisted before 1718, so we should assume all those assisted were less than £50 pa:

Amphill	1720	£200
Ridgmont	1720	£200
Clapham	1722	£200
Husborne Crawley	1724	£200
Husborne Crawley	1725	£101
Dunstable	1728	£20
Ridgmont	1728	£200
Biddenham	1732	£200
Elstow	1735	No amount recorded
Totternhoe	1737	ditto
Stanbridge	1737	ditto
Harrold	1740	ditto

Husborne Crawley and Ridgmont appear twice – clear evidence that the stipends were very low indeed. Both these parishes were still very poor in the 19th century – Husborne Crawley at £46 pa and Ridgmont £84 pa – well below the poverty line.

The Clear Yearly Values of all under £20 discharged livings are:

Tilsworth	£19 10s 0d
Studham	£19 4s 0d
Lidlington	£17 0s 0d
Flitwick	£17 0s 0d
Streatley	£15 0s 0d
Husborne Crawley	£14 5s 0d
Langford	£13 6s 0d
Stagsden	£11 0s 0d
Ridgmont with Segenhoe	£8 3s 4d
Biddenham	£8 0s 0d
Elstow	£7 9s 0d

If Ridgmont's annual income of £8 3s 4d is achieved only after receiving two Bounty augmentations of £4 pa, it must have had an income of under £1 before!

Patrons in 1754

Patrons who could present (i.e., nominate) an incumbent in Bedfordshire include:

Gentry (including Baronets)	31
Peerage	30
Oxford and Cambridge Colleges	26
The Crown	15
The Bishop of Lincoln	8
Eton College	3
Dean and Chapter of St Paul's	1

Of those owning several livings, the most interesting are probably:

Lord St John: 7 (Bletsoe, Melchbourne, Riseley, Shelton, Thurlleigh, Tilbrook, Yelden)

Lord Trevor: 5 (Biddenham, Carlton, Chellington, Stagsden, Stevington)

The Hon Mr York and Lady Grey: 4 (Blunham, Clophill, Harrold, Pulloxhill)

Duke of Bedford: 4 (Amphill, Eaton Socon, Eversholt, Steppingley¹⁷)

Sir Charles Chester, a Buckinghamshire Baronet: 3 (Fardish, Lidlington, Tilsworth)

Lord Bruce: 2 (Maulden, Millbrook).

A hundred years later the picture had changed little. If anything the peerage had strengthened its position: the Duke of Bedford now had 14 livings, Lord St John 4, and Earl de Grey 4. The Crown, too, was better represented (18). By contrast Oxford and Cambridge had lost ground (14), as had also the Church (Bishop of Lincoln, Dean and Chapter of St Paul's, and Dean and Chapter of Worcester 1 each). We think of the 18th century as the Age of Patronage. The 19th century was perhaps more adept at presenting it.

Pluralism

It was recognised that low stipends tended to encourage pluralism. The custom, widespread and deeply deplored, was for a well-connected cleric to acquire the incumbency of several parishes, put an underpaid curate in each, and pocket the revenues.¹⁸ The worst Bedfordshire example known to me is that of the Rev John Hawkins, who became Vicar of Flitwick in 1774. Two years later he succeeded his father as Rector of Higham Gobion¹⁹ becoming also Vicar of Hexton, Herts, and Rector of Amphill in the same year. In 1782 he became Rector of Barton-in-the-Clay. He held all five benefices until his death in 1820, when he described himself as living in yet another parish 'of Lawrence End, Kimpton in the County of Hertford', which implies he undertook duties at none of his five parishes.²⁰ If we look at the 1754 values, all of Hawkins' parishes, apart from Higham Gobion and Barton, are Discharged. Using Willis' Clear Yearly Values for the Discharged livings, and adding say a low £15 each for the other two, we get an approximate yearly income of £102. Of course

he had to pay five curates out of this, but even if revenues had not risen since 1754 he must still have done well. The Governors were criticised for not tackling pluralism. Did they realise that their £200 for Amphill was going to support the likes of Hawkins?

Notes

15. The text is Ecton 1719, p 90 (see text at n 7 in Pt 1, *HIB* 6,8), and the livings with their values are on pp 138–140. The poor livings in Ecton's list were the Leighton Buzzard Chapels and Upper Gravenhurst, referred to above.

16. Savidge, p 87. A few, marked as such, were chosen by lot (*ibid.* p 94), but do not include any Bedfordshire parishes.

17. He also had Woburn (see above) and at least 10 other livings, three in Bucks. and seven in Devon.

18. See, e.g., Savidge, p 111.

19. Hawkins senior was patron of the living. Presumably junior inherited it and so could present himself to the living.

20. J L Ward Petley, *Flitwick The Story of an Old Bedfordshire Village* (Chichester nd but 1909, reprinted Flitwick, 2002), p 91; John Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Later Series 1751–1900* (Cambridge, 1927–54); will at the National Archives PROB11/1625.

RICHARD MORGAN

A new Pevsner!

The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough. By Charles O'Brien and Nikolaus Pevsner. ISBN 978-0300-20821-4. Yale University Press. 2014. Casebound and jacketed, 215 x 115mm. xxii + 798pp. £35

This is the first comprehensive update and revision of Pevsner's guide to *Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* since first publication in 1968. Although in 1974 the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough was abolished and partly absorbed into Cambridgeshire, this new edition still observes the historic boundaries. It is based on the old text, revised and updated, and it has substantially increased in length, reflecting the many changes which have occurred in nearly 50 years.

Our county is one of the smallest English counties but has a great variety in landscape and architecture. The major monument is, of course, Woburn Abbey, one of the finest Georgian country houses in England, but many other attractions are covered including the churches of Bedford, Leighton Buzzard and Amphill, the majestic gardens at Wrest Park, hat-making factories in Luton and the colossal airship hangars at Cardington and the Modernist animal enclosures at Whipsnade Zoo.

Huntingdonshire and Peterborough are famous not only for Peterborough Cathedral and the spires of the stone medieval parish churches across its remote landscape but also for Burghley House and Vanbrugh's Kimbolton Castle. Some of the greatest buildings and places are not well known including the Bishop of Lincoln's medieval palace at Buckden and Thorpe Hall, the finest house of the Commonwealth, or the pretty town of St Ives with its medieval bridge across the Great Ouse and the remarkable model settlement at Thorney.

According to the publishers every building has been revisited and reassessed and many others, missed by Pevsner, are now included for the first time. They say that the guide has been brought fully up to date by a survey of the best architecture of the last 50 years. Published sources and archives were explored, finding much that is printed here for the first time. The text has also received input from local historians, librarians, archivists, clergy and churchwardens, head-teachers, house-owners and custodians who have answered queries and allowed visits.

The 'Pevsner' series, was founded in 1951 by Nikolaus Pevsner, who is acknowledged as one of the most learned and

stimulating 20th century writers on art and architecture. The series has become a byword for authoritative and comprehensive coverage of England's architecture.

Within each of the 'county' subdivisions of the book churches, public buildings, and unusual structures are covered in depth, and castles and mansions are described in detail. Towns are explored in a series of perambulations, which set the streets and buildings in historical context. Contemporary architecture is also included.

Major themes are surveyed in an historical introduction for each county, which includes chapters on geology and building materials for both counties, and, for Bedfordshire, prehistoric and Roman times, medieval architecture, Tudor and Stuart times, Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods, Bedfordshire since 1914 and 'further reading' followed by the Gazetteer.

The Huntingdonshire and Peterborough section follows, after the introduction, with chapters on prehistoric and Roman archaeology; medieval church architecture; major medieval secular buildings; smaller houses: medieval to late 17th century; major Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture; mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth century; the Georgian age; Victorian and after; and 'further reading' followed by the Gazetteer. Two chapters in this section are by specialist contributors.

There are six maps in the Bedfordshire section and 28 illustrations. The Huntingdonshire and Peterborough section has 8 maps and 29 illustrations. The text pages are cross-referenced to the maps. There is a 32-page section of colour plates after page 554 which, strangely, is not listed in the title pages. The Bedfordshire section takes up 352 pages and the Huntingdonshire and Peterborough part 378 pages.

A quotation from the perambulation of Bedford will give the flavour: 'The best thing visually about Bedford is the way the town has treated its river. Few English towns can be compared. The Embankment is a handsome street, and otherwise there are public gardens on both sides.'

There is an exhaustive glossary complete with illustrations of architectural styles followed by an index of architects, artists, patrons and residents. There are separate indexes of places for each county

Production values are very good and the anonymous typesetter has produced a book to the highest typographical standards – a pity that it had to be printed in China!

But this is an essential handbook and companion for those, who want to know more about the villages, towns and buildings in their area.

Book Notice:

The Rise of Methodism: A Study of Bedfordshire 1736–1851, by Jonathan Rodell. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society (Vol 92) and The Boydell Press, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF; Tel 01394 610600; e-mail: trading@boydell.co.uk or www.boydellandbrewer.com. £25 + postage £3 in the UK. Society members' discount of 25% = £18.75 per book; the discount code is **14211**, available until 31 December 2014.

A radical re-examination of the rise of early 19th century Methodism in Bedfordshire which will be reviewed in the next issue of *HIB*.
TED MARTIN

History in Bedfordshire is published by the
BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
For *HIB*: Editor: Ted Martin, 2A The Leys, Langford, Beds SG18 9RS.
Telephone: 01462 701096
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 the editor before sending any material. Copyright © 2014 Bedfordshire Local History Association and contributors. ISSN 0968-9761. Printed in Great Britain by Streets Process Colour Print, Baldock, Herts.