HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

THE JOURNAL OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
VOLUME 11, NO 2, Autumn 2026

< History of W H Allen, Sons & Co

John Mackay of Ravensden House

BLHA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026 REPORT

BLHA LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS
Introduction and Application Form

BLHA Bedfordshire Local History Association

BLHA LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

The Awards scheme was launched in 2024 by BLHA to foster original research, books, magazines and community projects about any aspects of the local history of Bedfordshire. It is being extended for 2026 to include the engagement of schools and colleges and partner-ship/collaboration with other societies.

2024 INAUGURAL AWARDS

Strong competition, with excellent entries for all categories. Winners were announced at an Awards Ceremony on 25 January 2025:

Best book:
The Friends of Bedford Cemetery, *Bedford's Victorian Cemetery*

Best journal:
Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society, *A History of Some Faith Groups in Bedford*

Best project*:*
Dawn Allen & colleagues, *The Great Siege of 1224 -the fall of Bedford Castle* (re-enactment)

Best website:
Turvey History Society

Highly commended website*:*
Colin Watt (Clophill)

2026 AWARDS

There will be six categories:

- **Books**
- **Journals/newsletters/articles**
- **Community projects**
- **Websites**
- **Schools & Colleges (run separately)**
- **Partnerships with another society** (either within Bedfordshire or a neighbouring county)

Entries may be made by individuals and societies for one or more categories. Entries must be submitted by 30 September2026.

All entrants will be invited to an awards event in January/February 2027 at which their entries will be publicised before winners are announced. Winning and 'highly commended' entrants will receive a framed Award certificate and a write-up in *History in Bedfordshire*.

Full details of how to apply, rules and application forms can be found on the BLHA website

www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

and in *History in Bedfordshire*.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE 2026 LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

Best book
For the best book on the history of any place, community, village or town in Bedfordshire, or topic, eg, education, local industry, faith, politics, etc. which relates to the county's local history**.**
Open to entries from individuals or Bedfordshire societies. Please submit a copy of your book and email the application form.

Best journal or newsletter or article
For the best Local History Society journal or newsletter, or individual article on the history of any place, community, village or town in Bedfordshire, or topic, eg, education, local industry, faith, politics, etc. which relates to the county's local history**.**
Open to entries from Bedfordshire societies. The journal/newsletter/article must have been published before the closing date. Please submit a copy of your journal, newsletter or article and email the application form.

Best community project
For the best local history or heritage community project on the history of any place, community, village or town in Bedfordshire.
Open to local history societies and community groups. The associated engagement events and project must have been largely completed before 30 September 2026. Please email PDFs of any supporting information along with your application form.

Best website
For the best website on the history of any place, community, village or town in Bedfordshire, or relevant theme.
Open to local history societies, community groups and individuals. The website must be up and running by 30 September 2026. Please email the link to your website and PDFs of any supporting information with your completed application.

Best partnership with another society:
For the best partnership by a Bedfordshire Local History Society with another society (either within Bedfordshire or a neighbouring county). The partner society need not be a local history society, for example, a family history society or heritage group would be eligible.
The partner society's consent must be secured before you submit your application. Please email PDFs of any supporting information, including a statement from your partner organisation along with your completed application.

Entries must be received by 30 September 2026.
Book/Journal submissions by post to:
Bob Ricketts, 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP

Email submissions, queries or want to learn more:
bob.ricketts57@gmail.com

2026 LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS
APPLICATION FORM

Contact details:

Name (Mr, Mrs, Ms, etc).....

Forename.....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....Postcode:.....

e-mail.....

Telephone.....

Society name.....

Closing date for applications:
Completed applications, together with PDFs of any supporting information, must be sent to Bob Ricketts by the 30th of September 2026.

Contact details, queries or want to learn more:
Bob Ricketts: Email: bob.ricketts57@gmail.com
Address: 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP

Privacy:
The information provided in your application will remain confidential and only be shared with the judging panel for the award(s) which you have applied for.

Categories applied for (please tick, you may apply for more than one category):

Best book	
Best journal, newsletter or article	
Best community project	
Best website	
Best partnership with another society	

***Best book*:**

Author name(s)	
Publisher:	
Title:	
Publication date:	
Target audience:	

Supporting statement:
Please provide a supporting statement setting out what attracted you to this subject, who you were writing it for, the research undertaken, feedback received, etc (1,000 words or less).

Please send a copy of your book to Bob Ricketts, contact details above.

Best journal, newsletter or article:

Title of journal or newsletter:	
Society/Publisher:	
Author/editor's name:	
Date published:	
Title of article (if appropriate):	
Target audience:	

Supporting statement: Please provide a supporting statement stating what attracted you to this/these subject(s), who you were writing for, research undertaken, feedback received, etc (1,000 words or less).

Please send a copy of your journal, newsletter or article to Bob Ricketts, contact details above.

Best community project:

Title of project:	
Name of leading society:	
Names of partner	
organisations:	
Date project begun:	
Date project completed:	
Summary of aims:	
Were the main aims achieved?	

Supporting statement:
Please provide a supporting statement setting out the aims of the project and anticipated benefits, a description of the activities undertaken, who participated, feedback received, the benefits realised and anticipated legacy. (1,000 words or less).

You may supplement your statement with PDFs of supporting information, eg, publicity material, comments from participants or community organisations, to Bob Ricketts, contact details above.

Best website:

Title of website:	
Produced by:	
Names of any partner	
organisations:	
Date functional website launched:	
Purpose/aims:	
Main intended audience(s):	
Link to website:	

Supporting statement: Please provide a supporting statement setting out the aims of the website and anticipated benefits, feedback received, future plans for development and the anticipated legacy. (1,000 words or less).

You can supplement your statement with PDFs of supporting information, e.g. publicity material, numbers viewing and any comments, etc to Bob Ricketts, contact details above.

Best partnership with another society:

Title of partnership:	
Name of your society:	
Names of partner	
organisations:	
Date partnership started:	
Is the partnership still active?	
Summary of aims:	
Were the main aims achieved?	

Supporting statement: Please provide a supporting statement setting out the aims of the partnership and anticipated benefits, a description of the activities undertaken, who participated, feedback received, the benefits realised and anticipated legacy. (1,000 words or less).

The partner society's consent must be secured before you submit your application. You may e-mail PDFs of any supporting information, including a statement(s) from your partner organisation, to Bob Ricketts contact details above.

BLHA Bedfordshire Local History Association *Autumn Event!*

Duck End Lane Farm: A Tour with Refreshments

At Duck End Lane, Wilshamstead
MK45 3HP on
Thursday, 3 September 2026, 10 am start

Your Committee of the Bedfordshire Local History Association tries to organise interesting and different events for our members! Well, this is certainly going to be different!

Have you thought of wandering around farm buildings? These farm buildings are different because they contain a lot of history: a collection of farm implements, lorries, cars, etc, referred to as dinosaurs by the owner!

In addition, the owner has collected over the years many historical documents, including maps of Bedford, etc, going back to 1890.

Cost and booking: £7.50 per person. This includes a selection of tea, coffee, biscuits and cakes.

The owner, Darren Maskell, supports the Milton Keynes-based charity *Medical Detection Dogs*, to which most of the bookings will be donated. For more information about the charity, please see: www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

To secure a place, visit www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

Bookings close, Wednesday, 27 August.

Further details will be sent to attendees on booking.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

VOLUME 11, NO 2, Autumn 2026

The Association's 34th Year

www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk

BLHA Local History Awards ~ *page 1*
Autumn Event ~ *page 10*

Articles:
BLHA Annual Conference 2026 Report ~ *page 12*
The History of W H Allen, Sons & Co Ltd & WHAEA: ROBIN MONICO ~ *page 16*
John Mackay of Ravensden House: TREVOR STEWART ~ *page 30*

Publication Received ~ *page 39*
Local History Books ~ *page 39*

History in Bedfordshire is published by the
BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk
For HIB: Editor: Ted Martin, 39 Chamomile Gardens, Cardamom Street, Biggleswade, Beds SG18 8YZ
Telephone: 01767 306103. 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 © 2026 Bedfordshire Local History Association and contributors. ISSN 0968–9761

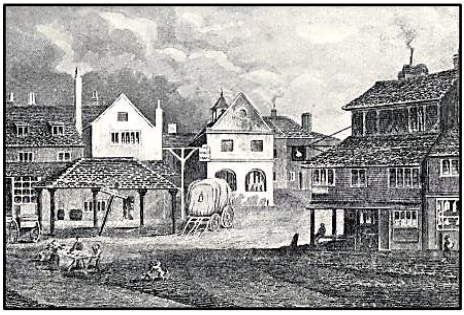
BLHA Annual Conference 2026

The event was held at St Mary's Parish Church in the centre of Luton on 6 June. The theme was 'Luton's Heritage: Made and Shaped'.

The talks focused on the diverse forces which shaped the development of the town from the late medieval through to modern times. The range of talks looked at the industries that evolved, the families that were prominent in the community and the influence of those families on the church and the railway network.

The history of George Street, Luton's Town Centre

The speaker, Paul Hammond, stressed the embryonic layout of the town which reflected a small population. The position of the two estates at Luton Hoo and Stockwood meant that any development to the south of the town was stifled. For centuries, the focus of the town was centred on George Street.



The drawings and early photographs of the street show how the buildings were moulded to meet both industrial, retail and commercial functions. Typically, the front of a premises might be offices or retail outlets whilst behind the scenes you had the suppliers of raw material and the manufacturing.

Most prominent were the straw plait merchants and the hat manufacturers, their carts of straw or finished products were often seen in the street, where the signages were flattened against the wall so they did not impede the highly laden carts.

The street was also the centre of the community and as such, was used for announcing election results, the parades of soldiers setting off and returning from the war front, political protest, including riots which did significant damage to some of the buildings, including, famously, the Town Hall. The photographs of the crowds congregating in George Street show everyone wearing a hat of some description.

Luton Made: Vauxhall

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, a project has been set up to celebrate the history of Vauxhall Motors here in Luton. The speakers were Toni Fielding & Aisha Hassan.

The focus of the project was on collecting oral histories from many previous employees to bring to life the everyday experiences of the workforce. The individuals and families involved covered all aspects from the Design Studio through to the assembly line workers. Where possible, any archival materials or personal artefacts were collected to be part of an exhibition which is currently running at Stockwood Discovery Centre. It is said 'that when Vauxhall sneezes, Luton catches a cold'.

The comments from the oral histories clearly show the extent of the impact of Vauxhall on the town in terms of both its demand on the land and its contribution to the social health and wealth of the population.

The Leigh Family at Luton Hoo and their involvement in the railways of Luton

The speaker, Felicity Brimblecombe, told how the Leigh family were the owners of the Luton Hoo estate in the 19th century. John Shaw Leigh had

added to his personal wealth through investment in the early developments of the railway network. His influence led to the positioning of two separate railway stations close to the Hoo estate on the parallel tracks, from different railway companies, which led into the capital.

Leigh used these somewhat remote stations to transport cattle from his new model farm into the market at Smithfield. This was considerably quicker than the drover's route and did not require the animals to be fattened up on arrival.

The stations were also used by the Leigh family and visitors to the Luton Hoo estate. The Prince of Wales used both stations in his visits during 1878 and 1886.

The Luton Hoo station forecourt was, unusually, covered by a canopy to protect carriages delivering passengers from Luton Hoo House.

The Power of Church Patronage to shape the social history of a town, 1763–1896

The speaker, Peter Adams, told how the advowson, the right to appoint the vicar, at St Mary's Church was held by Morcar, the priest, during the reign of Edward the Confessor. It was also held by the Earl of Gloucester before passing to Sir Robert Napier, Lord of the Manor of Luton in 1623. Since those times, it has closely followed the ownership of the Luton Hoo estate.

The sale of the estate to John Stuart, the 3rd Earl of Bute, on his resignation as Prime Minister in 1763, made him and his descendants the patron of the church for a significant period.

The position came with a not insignificant sum of wealth, including the vicarage and nearby farmland. With the normal degree of nepotism, John appointed members of his family to the

post of vicar. His nephews were the main beneficiaries. The church went through a decline as the appointed incumbents neglected their duties and left day-to-day operations to the curate. This period coincided with an expansion of Nonconformism in the town.

The incumbents even disliked the location of the vicarage and moved their families to Copt Hall which was on higher ground away from the river. They were eventually called 'The Five Missing Vicars'.

At the end of the conference there was a guided tour of the Church, looking at the monuments, chapels and the unique baptistry where the font is enclosed within an impressive canopy where family and godparents can fit inside.

Societies represented at the conference:
Ampthill & District Archaeological & Local History Society
Ampthill & District Preservation Society
Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society
Bedford Association of Tour Guides
Bedfordshire Archives
Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust
Bedfordshire Family History Society
Bedfordshire Gardens Trust
Bunyan 400
Dunstable & District Local History Society
Leighton Buzzard & District Archaeological & Historical Society
Luton Music
Luton & District Historical Society
Potton History Society
Sharnbrook Local History Group
Shillington History Society
St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society
Tempsford Museum and Archives

Des Hoar
Chairman, Bedfordshire Local History Association

The History of W H Allen, Sons & Co Ltd & WHAEA

The W H Allen Engineering Association (WHAEA) is a recent addition to the historical societies affiliated with BLHA. Established after the closure of the Queens Engineering Works in Ford End Road, Queens Park, Bedford, the association traces its origins to June 1907, when the inaugural dinner of the W H Allen Past and Present Pupils' Association was held at the Balmoral Rooms, Trocadero, London. The association continues to organise an annual dinner – now less formal – as well as an Annual General Meeting, at a venue of engineering relevance, regularly attracting around 60 members (ex-employees) and guests.

The W H Allen Engineering Association (WHAEA) is dedicated to preserving the heritage of W H Allen, Sons & Co Ltd. With an active committee and a membership of approx. 330 individuals, the association undertakes various projects to safeguard relevant products, documents, and memorabilia for future generations.

This raises the question: What accounts for the continuing interest in a company that ceased manufacturing operations in Bedford over 25 years ago? The answer may be found in W H Allen's enduring legacy. Consistently throughout our WHAEA projects, we encounter individuals who remark, 'I remember Allens; I had a relative who worked there', or 'I worked there – it was an excellent company'. Indeed, many people in Bedfordshire and beyond are familiar with, or have personal connections to, former employees of Allens.

Plate 1. Past and Present Pupils Association, June 1910

The history of W H Allen

The company is named after William Henry Allen who was born in Cardiff in 1844 but had family roots in Devon. Mr Allen began his career in Llanelli in 1859 and joined J & H Gwynne & Co in London in 1868, eventually becoming general manager after 11 years. The company produced centrifugal pumps, steam engines and electrical dynamos. While working at Gwynnes, he built strong relationships with the top engineers and shipbuilders of his time.

In 1880, William Henry resigned and opened his own business in York Street, Lambeth, London. The company began with a workforce of around 100, which grew to 450 by 1890.

Plate 2. The W H Allen workforce at York Street, 1890

Just three months after starting, the company completed its first order: an 8-inch centrifugal pump priced at £50. Soon after, they delivered a second order – a 15-inch pump named 'Conqueror', a brand that Allen pumps would use for over a century. Within a few years, they started producing steam engines to power the pumps and later added dynamos to pair with the engines.

By 1885, the company produced its initial generating sets for the Admiralty: two-cylinder steam engines powering 12kW dynamos, with three units delivered to HMS *Thunderer* and HMS *Devastation*. In 1893, just before relocating to Bedford, Richard Allen, William Henry's son, joined the company, aged 26, as a partner, prompting a name change to 'W H Allen, Son and Company'.

The relocation from London was necessitated by the adjacent railway's construction of a new signal box close to Allen's foundry. The conditions within the elevated signal box during foundry operations ultimately led the railway to require Allen's departure from the site.

Mr W H Allen and the Allen family

W H Allen, Sons & Co operated as a family enterprise from its inception until the late 1960s, at which point it was incorporated into larger

organisations including Amalgamated Power Engineering (APE) Ltd, Northern Engineering Industries (NEI) and, subsequently, Rolls-Royce plc.

William Henry Allen demonstrated a strong commitment to his family, employees and the local community. He married twice and had 13 children, 12 with his first wife, Anne Mary Pemberton Howell, and one with his second wife, Madeline Agnew Fedden.

Six years after founding his company, his wife Anne, known as Annie to her family, passed away in January 1886 at 1 Deans Yard, Westminster. She was interred at Brompton Cemetery on 15 January.

During a train journey north, William Henry observed land for sale adjacent to Bedford Midland Road Station. After inspecting the site, he promptly negotiated with the owners and acquired 20 acres. Contracts were executed for constructing new offices and manufacturing facilities, resulting in Allen, his family and several London-based employees relocating to Bedford in 1894. Initially residing in temporary lodgings, Allen later moved to Kimbolton Lodge on Kimbolton Road, which remains standing today.

Plate 3. Bromham House, north-east: a quiet afternoon

Subsequently, he purchased 190 acres at Bromham, near Bedford, known as Salem Thrift. Bromham House was constructed on the property, designed collaboratively by his architect son George and Arthur Bloomfield & Partners, where George received his training. By 1900, gardens, parkland, and a farm were established. Upon Allen's death, on 3 September 1926, the house was sold and repurposed as a hospital.

Following their arrival in Bedford, various members of the family became actively involved in both town and country life. They participated

in civic activities, welfare work, sports and the arts, among other pursuits. For example, William Henry served as High Sheriff in 1904; Richard in 1921; Harold in 1925; and Kenneth Allen (his grandson) in 1958 – meaning four Allens held the position over 54 years. William Henry and Richard were Deputy Lieutenants and, along with Harold, they also served as Justices of the Peace. Additionally, Richard, Norman, and Kenneth served on the County Council. Richard was instrumental in developing the Bedford Musical Festivals, Rupert supported local hospitals and Norman contributed to education at Mander College and the Cranfield College of Technology.

William Henry provided significant financial support for building All Saints' Church in Queens Park – the parish where his business operated. George Allen, his son, who was also an architect, helped design the church, and later generations, as well as the company itself, continued to assist the church in various ways.

The family business, commonly known as 'Allens', both locally and beyond expanded under the leadership of William Henry and his three sons: Richard, Harold, and Rupert. Eventually, Kenneth and his brother Norman (Harold's sons) joined as directors. Richard's son Melville was part of the company briefly before he died serving with the Royal Flying Corps in 1917. Later, Melville's son Dennis joined the business after his service as an Engineer Officer in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. At the war's end, Patrick Hickey – William Henry's grandson through his youngest daughter – joined the company after leaving the army. In subsequent years, Kenneth's son Charles and Norman's son David also became part of the firm.

William Henry Allen passed away on 3 September 1926.

Early days in Bedford (1893–1914)

The area west of the Midland Railway main line, bounded by Old Ford End Road to the south and Bromham Road to the north, was designated for residential development and named Queen's Park in honour of Queen Victoria. Adjacent to this, a 20-acre strip between the railway and the undeveloped Hurst Grove was allocated for industrial purposes.

The initial phase of development included the construction of a substantial brick office building fronting Ford End Road, with a 20,000 square feet factory situated behind it. Further to the rear were separate facilities for a foundry, smithy, and pattern store.

Plate 5. Early building works adjacent to Ford End Road, 1894

In total, the factory encompassed approximately 40,000 square feet, making it twice the size of the company's London works. Approximately 100 employees from London opted to relocate to Bedford, with many subsequently advancing to senior roles within the organisation.

<Plate 6. The Works front gate during construction, 1894

In 1905, to mark the company's 25th anniversary, William Henry announced to his staff that, in keeping with a promise made three years earlier, he had acquired three-quarters of an acre in Hurst Grove for the establishment of what would become known as the 'Allen Institute'.

This building provided a library, games room, billiard room and smoke room. On the works side of the building was a large dining hall and kitchen. This dining hall provided the workers with a meal midday and in the evenings the hall could be used for social functions.

Following the closure of the factory in 2000, it operated as an independent club for a few years, with many of its clientele being ex-Allen men and women. Now converted into care facilities, the Allen Club, as it became known, is the only part of Allens remaining on the Queens Works site.

Plate 7. The Allen Institute on Hurst Grove built in 1907

Pumps were the company's primary product until the turn of the 19th century, as they were well-understood technology. As steam engine design advanced, engines shifted from open crankcases with drip lubrication to enclosed crankcases for greater power and higher pressure. Lubrication remained poorly understood, but Allens led innovation, producing their first fully enclosed, forced-lubrication steam engine in 1897.

Around 1906, merchant marine was embarking on a race to build the biggest and fastest liners for the Atlantic crossing. The *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* provided good orders for Allens' fans and pumps, followed by similar equipment for the Cunard liners *Umbria*, *Etruria*, *Campania* and *Lucania*.

In 1909 Allens received orders from the White Star Line for eight steam generating sets for the *Olympic* and the *Titanic*.

The order confirmation was a handwritten note from Lord Pirie saying:

> I have pleasure in asking you to put in hand 8 sets of 400kw Steam Engines and Generators in accordance with your schedule no. 15 at a total contract price of £20,000 (twenty thousand pounds sterling).
>
> Believe me
> Yours sincerely, Pirie.

One major problem in ships boiler rooms was the ability to get combustion air to the boilers and to reduce the temperature in the stoke hold. Allens produced their first engine with a forced draught fan in 1883.

These units were a major activity at Allens well into the mid-20th century when steam gave way to diesels for main propulsion.

During these years much development went on with surface condensers. These again became a mainstay in the Allen product line.

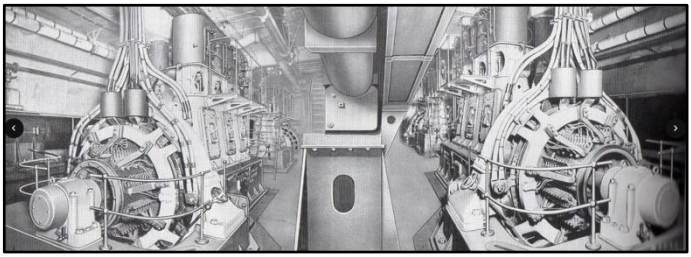


Plate 8. Four steam engine generator sets as installed on the Titanic *and* Olympic *in 1912*

In 1907 Allens produced their first steam turbines to a German design, but Allens had signed a licence agreement with Parsons in 1906.

Single-stage turbines were produced, and these were shortly followed by two-stage versions for electrical power generation.

From these beginnings, steam turbines became a mainstay of Allen production both for marine and land-based applications culminating in the turbine generator sets in the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, which are steam driven after all.

Plate 9. Leaving the Works, September 1910

Allens first true heavy oil engine (diesel) was supplied to Bedford Corporation Electricity department around 1910.

The years preceding the Great War were ones of prosperity for Allens with a growing factory and workforce aided by the build-up of the Navy preparing for a possible war.

The Great War (1914–1918)

By 1914, Allens supplied machinery to British shipyards, employing about 1,300 men with half their output for the Admiralty. When war began, 300 staff enlisted; Allens supported enlistees with half-pay and provisions for widows, though 32 employees died.

In 1915 Allens received a War Office order for 100 Le Rhône versions of the Gnome rotary aircraft engine, prompting expansion to a new 20-acre Biddenham site, which was fully operational within months. The facility, overseen by George Pemberton Allen, eventually included foundries, workshops, offices, and a canteen.

By 1917, the company's engines powered several aircraft types. Post-Armistice, outstanding orders were cancelled, 500 women were laid off, and the aero engine department closed in 1919. The equivalent of 3,221 Le Rhône engines were built, including whole engines and spares.

Allens remained focused on innovation and employee development, and in 1918 established Allen Park, a recreational club for staff, which was later donated to the local council and is still used today.

Plate 10. Allen Park Pavilions

Between the Wars (1919–1938)

During the Great War, the company focused solely on production without planning for peacetime products, expecting a quick return to normal that didn't happen. Returning soldiers found jobs scarce, government contracts ended abruptly, and exports fell sharply due to global protectionism. By

1921, the company experienced its worst trading year, but restructured, and adopted the name 'W H Allen, Sons & Co Ltd'. Over the next 12 years, it survived with small contracts and licensing deals. The depression in 1932 hit British industry hard, causing setbacks for Allens and leading another local firm into liquidation. In 1933, Allens consolidated production at Queens, selling part of Biddenham Works for housing. As recession eased, output improved significantly by 1935. The Navy began upgrading ships, and the company secured commercial orders, including a significant pumping station project. Secret Admiralty orders in 1935 led Allens to rapidly increase War Department production for naval rearmament.

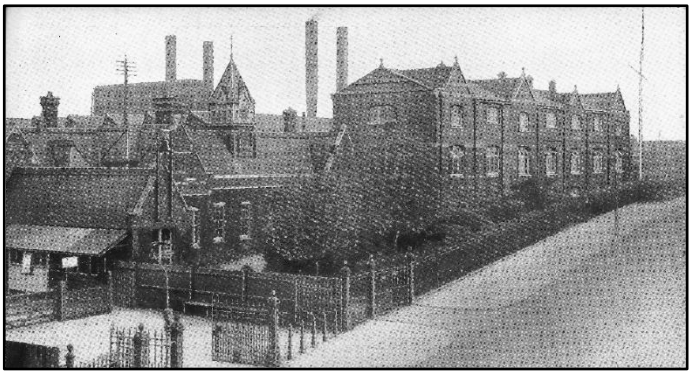


Plate 11. Queens Engineering Works entrance and offices, 1930

The Second World War (1939–1945)

When the war commenced, Allens was fully prepared. By the summer of 1939, 60% of its production was dedicated to the Navy. The company made a strategic decision to cap Navy contracts at 60% of total output, opting to continue supporting both the Merchant Marine and the utility sector.

During the war years, Allens experienced significant expansion. The Biddenham facility was reopened and supplemented with additional buildings. At Queens, a new office block was constructed, and a separate machine shop was established apart from the existing workshops.

Wartime drove rapid technological advances and significant R&D alongside increased production. HMS *Belfast*, now in London, suffered major damage in 1939; iron castings were replaced with steel fabrications as a result.

The workforce experienced long hours – factories operated nearly around the clock with minimal closure, and employees had limited time

off. Air raids caused frequent interruptions, losing 109,000 work hours by late 1941, although no direct bomb damage occurred. A Home Guard unit of 450 men was formed to defend both the factory and the town.

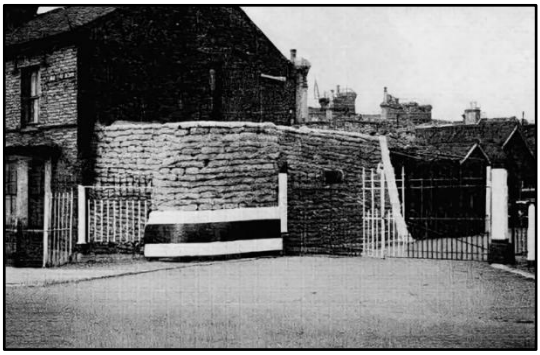


Plate 12. Air raid preparations, 1939

At war's start, there were 2,211 workers (147 enlisted, 37 women employed). By December 1943, staffing peaked at 3,034, including 458 full-time and 54 part-time women. The company also introduced rare benefits such as a staff pension, life assurance and a paid holiday fund before the war.

The end of the war in August 1945, led to the cancellation of all pending naval orders.

The post war years (1945–1968)

Following the war, the company's policy of restricting the proportion of its total output allocated to naval work allowed it to deviate from the difficult prevailing industry trends.

Significant losses to merchant shipping during the war prompted the construction of new liners and freighters with W H Allen receiving many orders. Notably, 1947 saw the launch of the *Pretoria Castle*, followed by the *Orcades* a few months later and the Cunard *Caronia* in October; all included Allen turbo-generators and auxiliary machinery.

Furthermore, extensive damage inflicted upon the utility sector during the conflict resulted in a surge of orders aimed at both replacing damaged infrastructure and resuming pre-war development initiatives.

The training, welfare and development of employees continued to be recognised and the *Allen Magazine* which was published from 1949 to 1966 records the activities of all connected with Allens.

Plate 13. Employees' children's parties and outings, 1960s

Amalgamations (1968–1990)

Allens continued as an independent family business until the late 1960s, when market pressures led to diversification attempts and eventual mergers. Fosters acquired Gwynnes in 1927, later shifting their focus to pump manufacturing. Allens acquired Fosters and Gwynnes in 1960, forming Allen Gwynne Pumps, then merged with Bellis & Morcom in 1968 to create Amalgamated Power Engineering Ltd (APE).

Plate 14. Allens main gate,1980s

APE included several engineering companies and expanded internationally. In 1981, Northern Engineering Industries (NEI) acquired APE, consolidating major northern British firms involved in power plant construction. By 1988, facing industry decline, NEI sold the large pump

business to Weir Pumps, and a number of ex-Pump Division employees created The Bedford Pump Company, now Bedford Pumps Ltd. In 1989 Rolls-Royce acquired NEI and thus Queens Engineering Works.

Plate 15. Aerial view of Queens Engineering Works, 1980

The Rolls-Royce years

The Queens Engineering Works in Bedford continued to operate throughout the 1990s under Rolls-Royce ownership with work now focused on diesel engine production and support. Allen Steam Turbines started by operating a service and spares operation within the Queens Engineering Works site. In 1999, the decision was taken to focus on turbine refurbishment, support and maintenance rather than commercial manufacture.

In 2001 Allen Steam Turbines became part of Weir Power & Industrial, and the company relocated to a new industrial unit between Clapham and Oakley.

Despite several attempts to reorganise the factory and introduce new manufacturing methods, the future of large reciprocating engines at Bedford was inevitable after Rolls-Royce acquired Vickers in 1999. Rolls-Royce moved heavy-oil engine production to Bergen, Norway, and closed Queens Engineering Works in 2000. The end of a 120-year family business.

Allens today (2026)
Many people might find it unexpected that the Allen name continues to be associated with several divisions that were sold off towards the end of the 20th century. These divisions include:

- Allen Diesels – operating from their office in the Pilgrim Centre in Bedford and continuing to supply and service Allen diesels around the world.
- Bedford Pumps Ltd – operating from Kempston, currently part of the Hidrostal Group based in Switzerland.
- Allen Steam Turbines – based in Oakley and part of Trillium Flow Technologies Ltd. The business is strong and the customers have remained faithful.
- Allen Gears – the Allen Gears name can still be seen on new epicyclic gearboxes being dispatched from the Baker Hughes manufacturing plant in France.

The W H Allen Engineering Association (WHAEA)
Sustained interest in a company that discontinued manufacturing operations in Bedford more than 25 years ago may be attributed to various factors. Many of these originated from William Henry during his tenure as chairman of the company. Although now considered standard practice, these initiatives were innovative at the time:

- Acknowledging the overall welfare needs of every employee of the company.
- Offering social, sports and recreational amenities to everyone, including the families of workers (such as the Allen Club and Allen Park).
- Supplying dining options accessible to all staff members.
- Directors, managers and the Allen family actively connecting with both office personnel and shop floor staff.
- Engaging with and providing resources for the local community, for instance, through funding All Saints' Church, donating beds to Bedford Hospital, or sponsoring the Bedford River Festival.
- Building camaraderie and fostering mutual support among employees.
- Conducting engineering training programmes and presenting career development opportunities, as well as awards that celebrate trainee accomplishments.

- Involving staff and their families by coordinating events, excursions, and outings.

The WHAEA association, led by former Allens employees, promotes the company's heritage and its products and services. WHAEA has supported several museums and organisations in preserving this 125-year legacy.

- The Higgins Museum Bedford (which includes a W H Allen display).
- Bedfordshire Archives (holds a vast collection of W H Allen documents, magazines, brochures, records and photos).
- Internal Fire Museum of Power, Ceredigion, Wales (an extensive collection of W H Allen engines).
- Prickwillow Museum of Fenland Drainage (W H Allen products).
- The Waterworks Museum, Hereford.
- The Imperial War Museum HMS *Belfast*, London.

The association maintains a digital archive with more than 1,000 W H Allen magazines, which are fully searchable and extremely helpful for uncovering Bedford family links and Allen history.

The WHAEA publication, *A Directory of UK-based Heritage Archives, Artefacts and Sites* (December 2024), provides a comprehensive listing of Allens' heritage archives, artefacts, and sites with Allen heritage items across the UK.

References

Allen, Mr W H: *The Allen Family at Bromham House.* A photograph album, 1905.

Early Days in Bedford (1893–1914), https://www.whaea.co.uk/the-company/early-days-in-bedford/

Lane, Michael R: *The Story of Queen's Engineering Works, Bedford.* London: Unicorn Press, 1995, ISBN 0–906290–09–0.

W H Allen Engineering Association: *A Directory of UK based Heritage Archives, Artefacts and Sites,* 2024.

—: *Company History,* 2005. https://www.whaea.co.uk/company-history/

—: *Made in Bedford Interviews by Bedford Creative Arts & Higgins Museum,* 2018-2026.

—: *Mr W H Allen, His Life and Work. An illustrated tribute as reported in the Bedfordshire Times & Independent on Friday 10th September 1926 following his death,* 2021.

—: *The W H Allen Engineering Association Archives.* https://www.whaea.co.uk/, 2026.

—: *The W H Allen Hall of Fame,* 2024.

—: *The WHAEA Newsletters,* Nos. 1–17, 2018–2026.

John Mackay of Ravensden House

The extensive web of connections between various families living or serving in India during the late 1700s and up to the Rebellion of 1857 is well documented. It is also known that the development of Bedford in the early years of the 19th century was very much influenced by many of these families returning to Britain searching for a good education for their children. There were soon to be famous names living in the town, who had intermarried during service in India, the Le Mesuriers, the Huddlestons, the Whitesides and the Macintoshes, to name but a few.

John Mackay of Scottish extraction was yet another when he bought the estate of Ravensden in 1818. But what is the Mackay story?

John Mackay's grandfather, John, born 1697, and his wife Grisselle Avis, born 1689, were married at St Martin in the Fields, London, on 6 June 1720. They had a son, James, born in London in 1732 and baptised at St Martin in the Fields, and he became the father of our Ravensden John.

James married Betty or Betsy Barker at St Martin in the Fields on 29 February 1756 and they had six children, three girls and three boys. John, was the youngest of these.

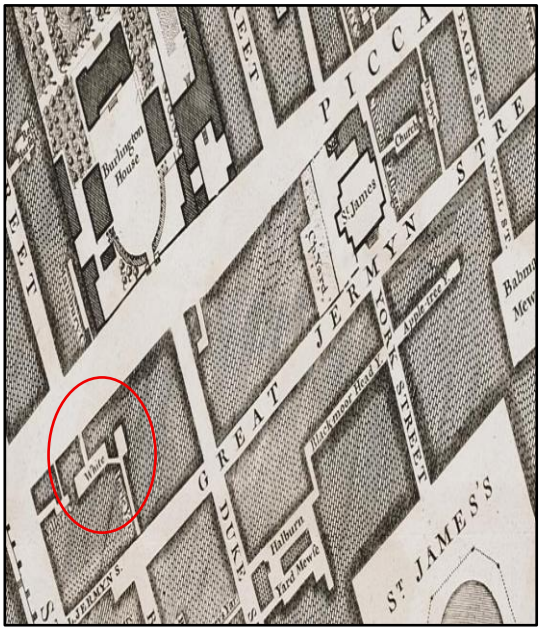
Name	*Born*	*Baptised*	*Church*
James	29 May 1757	19 June 1757	St Martin in the Fields
Elizabeth	9 March 1759	19 March 1759.	ditto
Richard	29 October 1760	9 November 1760	St James's, Piccadilly
Margaret	5 January 1763	23 January 1763	ditto
Jane	15 May 1768	5 June 1768	ditto
John	26 December 1769	21 January 1770	ditto

Note the change from St Martin's to St James's Parish, which would appear to suggest that the family had moved to Piccadilly around 1760.

Betty the mother of these children died in London in December 1789 and was buried at St James's (St. James's Gardens) and James their father died in London in 1795. Given his extensive connection with St James's, Piccadilly, it is almost certain that he was also interred in the same place, possibly even the same grave.

James Mackay, Sr, was an upholsterer based in Piccadilly. Further research reveals that at that time 'upholsterer' meant slightly more than at present. While that was the primary trade, they were also what we would

now know as designers and interior decorators and thus worked in many prestigious houses, for influential people and for members of the aristocracy.



In 1762 he took the lease of a property at the rear of 171 Piccadilly once known as the White Horse Inn with stables attached. The property was in the ownership of the Crown. He clearly ran it as an inn for a very short time as well as his upholstery business.

A London directory of 1780 describes James Mackay as an upholsterer at 171 Piccadilly and a further lease of 1784 mentions the White Horse Yard but not the Inn, which must have been de licensed and turned into a private house by then.

James died in February 1795 and by 1805 the property, with a frontage of 167ft, had come into the possession of his son John Mackay, described as an oilman, that is, a dealer in whale and vegetable oils, waxes, candles and even some types of paints, all much in demand before the discovery of natural oil and petroleum. John requested an extension to the lease to enable him to rebuild part of the premises.

The house by this time had been divided into two units and the stables were in public use. It was recommended by the Crown Agents that the site should be cleared and six dwelling-houses erected. John appears to have agreed to this and in 1806 the lease was extended to 99 years. However, it seems that it was some time before rebuilding could begin and in 1810 Mackay had to make a new application. Ultimately the fabulous and now historic display and exhibition hall, known as the Egyptian Hall, was erected on the frontage.

What this means, of course, is that James had become a very, very wealthy man with the right contacts, and through the arrangements he had made in the various leases and in his will, his son John had inherited rather well.

Interestingly, neither wife Betty, nor his older sons James and Richard are mentioned in the will dated 5 July 1793, suggesting that they had all predeceased him. However, it is worthy of note that, in his will, James had also made more than adequate provision for his daughters, Elizabeth, Margaret and Jane.

There will be more about John later. Now for the other children.

James Mackay

Little has been found about James Mackay, born 29 May 1757, and it is assumed that he worked for either his grandfather or his father. A James Mackay died aged 22 in London on 18 June 1779 and was buried in St Margaret's, Westminster. This could possibly be him especially as he is not mentioned in the later will of his father.

Elizabeth Mackay

Elizabeth Mackay, born in London on 9 March 1759, married Major-General Dugald Campbell of the East India Company Army at Fort St George, Madras, on 31 July 1777. They had nine children, seven boys and two girls: James, Donald, Dugald, William, John, Margaret, Archibald Henry, Elizabeth and Charles.

After an illustrious army career, their son James became Major-General Sir James Campbell. Donald died in infancy, Dugald joined the 88th Regiment of Foot and died in Ceylon; William joined the 3rd Madras Cavalry; John the 1st Madras Cavalry, Archibald Henry went to sea and became captain of the *Duke of York* in the East India Company fleet and died at sea off St Helena in December 1824 on a return journey from China.

After his army career with the 94th Regiment of Foot, Charles retired and came to live at Ravensden with his uncle and then after his uncle's death, with his Aunt Jane and her family in Bath.

One particularly interesting aspect of the life of Major-General Dugald Campbell (the father of Major-General Sir James Campbell) is that much of the correspondence between him and his employers the East India Company and Lord Wellesley, Governor General of Bengal, remains extant and can be read.

Elizabeth died in Edinburgh on 2 April 1801 aged 42 and her husband at Portsea, Portsmouth, on 10 September 1809.

[This portrait of Elizabeth is in the National Gallery of Canada and has a lock of the hair of each of the children attached to the reverse of the mount. (Courtesy: National Gallery of Canada, https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/your-collection/a-miniature-portrait-of-elizabeth-campbell-by-john-smart).]

Richard Mackay

Richard Mackay was born on 29 October 1760 in London. Little is known about Richard except that he died in February 1790 aged 29 and was buried at St James's Piccadilly (St James's Gardens).

Margaret Mackay

Margaret Mackay was born on 5 January 1763 in London. She married John Home of Bassendean, near Berwick. The marriage took place at Fort St George, Madras, India, in either 1784 or 1785.

Their first child, a daughter, Mary, was baptised at Fort St George on 17 April 1786. John Home was a captain in the army of the East India Company and of a junior branch of the very ancient Hume family, so prominent in Scottish history. He was the youngest son of Rev William Home, the vicar of a village named Fogo also near Berwick. One of John's brothers became Admiral Home, another was Colonel of the 42nd Regiment, and another Captain of the 16th Foot. Two became clergymen.

Although he was the ninth child, by weird twist of fate, John inherited the Bassendean estate in 1789 but only lived there until his own death about eight years later.

After their return to Scotland, thought to be 1788, John and Margaret had a son in 1797, almost 10 years after his sister. He finally took the name John Home-Home to distinguish himself from his father John Home.

Home-Home, too, went on to have a full military career with the 56th Regiment of Foot and as commanding officer of the Grenadier Guards. He was also Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia.

He inherited Bassendean from his father, but he had never married and had no children, the estate then passed to the son of his sister Mary.

Margaret [Mackay] Home died in Edinburgh in January 1806 and is interred in the churchyard of Greyfriars Church.

Her daughter Mary married at St Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, in October 1806 and the Register entry reads: 'Mary the daughter of the deceased John Home Esq of Bassendean', so, although the date of John's death has not been found, it must have been between 1797, when his son was born, and 1806, when his daughter married.

Jane Mackay

Jane Mackay **was** born on 15 May 1768 in London. She married Captain Webster Whistler of the 24th Regiment of Light Dragoons by special licence at St George's, Hanover Square, on 18 October 1800.

Webster was from the well-known family of Whistler of Fairlight, Hastings and Battle. His father was vicar of Hastings. Captain Whistler died in Kensington, London, on 8 September 1837. They had five children, all born in London, three sons who served in the army in India, and two daughters. Of the daughters, Ann was born 1811 (some records say 1797) and Eliza was born in 1816 (some records say 1821). Ann was engaged to her cousin Archibald Henry Campbell (one of sister Elizabeth's sons), a sea captain, but he died at sea, so the wedding never took place.

On Webster's death, Jane and her two daughters joined her brother John Mackay and Charles Campbell at Ravensden House where they remained until Mackay himself died. They then moved with Campbell first, to Teignmouth, Devon, and then Pulteney Street, Bath. They all died in Bath: Jane in May 1860, Ann in February 1868, Eliza on Christmas Day 1857, and Charles Campbell in April 1852, and they are buried side by side in the grounds of Bath Abbey.

John Mackay

John Mackay was born on 26 December 1769 in London. The youngest of the children. With his brothers dead and his sisters either married or

betrothed and well provided for in the will of their father, John Mackay, as the surviving son, inherited considerable wealth which allowed him to pursue a military career as well as later to purchase the Ravensden Estate and construct the house.

John, having been involved in the land transactions of his father and no doubt also his upholstery business, then became an oilman in his own right.

At some stage, while still party to the Piccadilly leases, he seems to have joined the army, at first the Renfrewshire Militia, which was founded as a home defence regiment in 1793. In 1803 it became the Argyllshire Militia; in 1855 the Prince of Wales' Royal Regiment of Militia; and, in 1856, a battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, until being finally disbanded in August 1878.

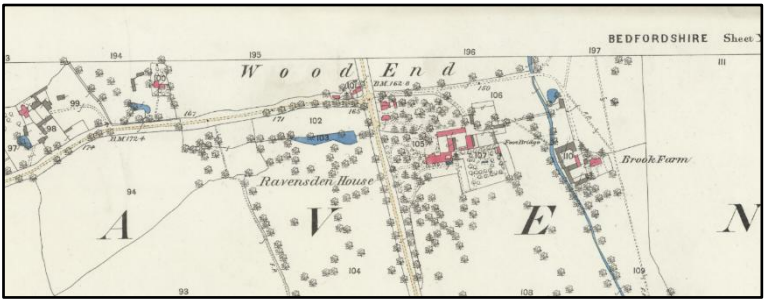
In the early 1800s the Argyllshire Militia were based both on the south coast, between Dover and Margate, protecting the coastline from possible invasion by Napoleon, but also in Ireland. They were located at Pevensey Barracks in Sussex for several years and then in London guarding the Bank of England, followed by a further period in Ireland.

Sometime just after 1815, when he was known to have been in Ireland with the regiment, he retired and, having 'given up' on London, in 1818, Mackay purchased the estate in Ravensden which then consisted of, on the west, the land on both sides of the unsurfaced byeway from Ravensden to Thurleigh and, to the south, up to the road from Bedford to Kimbolton. There was a farmhouse close by known as Brook Farm, but this was not included in the purchase at that time and was far enough away to not interfere with Mackay's own plans for a large new house surrounded by ornamental parkland and to be known as 'Ravensden Park'. (Brook Farm was eventually purchased by the Wythes in 1881 and remains part of the current estate.)

However, Mackay's plans were never fully completed. The house was built but the parkland was never laid out. Possibly, the adoption of the road that ran through the estate made Mackay reconsider, as it is known that he was opposed to the surfacing and adoption of the unsurfaced byeway from Ravensden to Thurleigh. Or, by then, despite his investments (both he and Campbell were known to have had considerable capital in the East India Company), sufficient finance was simply not available to complete the work.

While at Ravensden, John Mackay, who referred to himself as a colonel in the Argyllshire Militia, became something of a local figurehead. He

served as churchwarden, Overseer of the Poor and was unsuccessfully nominated for the office of High Sheriff of Bedfordshire in 1824.



He kept a fully operational farm (Traylesfield), invested in one of the early brickyards that had opened in the village and, together with Campbell, they built the row of cottages on Bedford Road, Ravensden, that became known as 'Campbelltown', and which are still standing but now barely recognisable.

Having then also been joined by his sister, the 1841 Census for Ravensden shows:

1	Wood End	MacKay	John	65	Ind	Ind
		Campbell	Charles	45	Ind	Scotland
		Whistler	Jane	60	Ind	N
		Whistler	Ann	30		N
		Whistler	Eliza	25		N
		Lee	Elizabeth	35	F S	N
		Headland	Mary	20	F S	N
		Gascoine	Thomas	20	M S	Y
		Braizer	John	15	M S	Y
		Mc Dowell	John	20	M S	Scotland

When John Mackay died at Ravensden House on 28 February 1849 he was 77 years of age, his death was reported by John Brazier who stated that he had worked for him for 10 years. Mackay had appointed his nephews, Charles Campbell and John Home-Home, as the executors of his estate and in his will, dated 19 December 1843, Mackay left everything to them equally.

Campbell sold his share to Home-Home who then promptly put up the house, the contents and the land (141 acres) and livestock, for sale by auction commencing 9 April 1849. The complete sale took three days.

Although John Mackay was recorded as being at Ravensden House, he was not buried in the village, and, to date, nothing has been found to indicate where his burial actually took place. It could possibly have been at St James's with his parents or maybe somewhere in Scotland.

Most remarkably, though, within 41 days of John's death, everything was being sold, compared to today when it can take many months, even years.

By the end of the year, the house and land had been fully acquired and occupied by Francis Wythes, a railway contractor, and the furniture and contents of the house dispersed. Jane, Ann and Emma Whistler, plus Charles Campbell had moved south, eventually settling in Bath.

And thus, after 31 years, there began another chapter in the life of Ravensden House !

Ravensden House

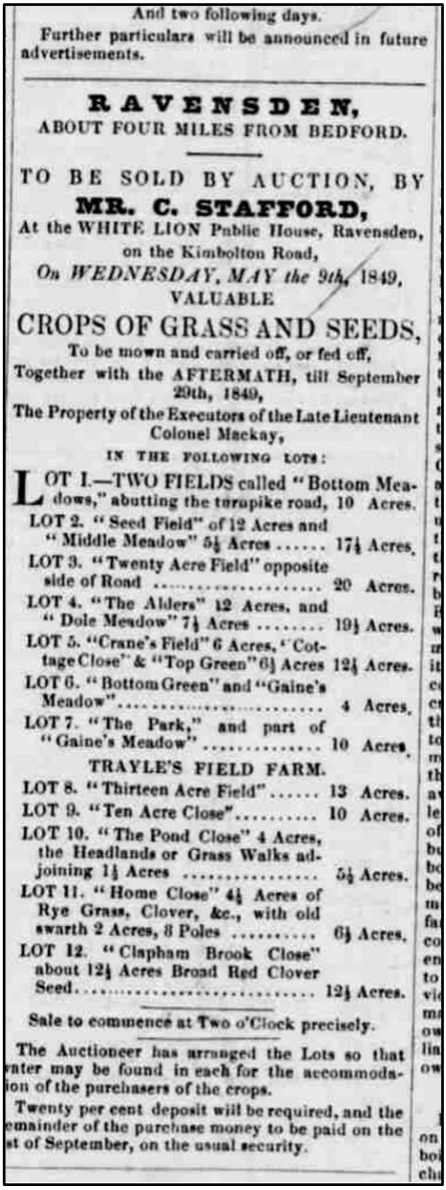
Ravensden House was the largest house in the village with 14 rooms. It is a substantial brick-built property.

Francis Wythes purchased the property and moved in with his family in 1851, continuing to live there until 1942 when he died. Mr Edmonds owned the house for a short time but, on his death in 1943, it was requisitioned by the government as the main training headquarters for the Women's Land Army in the county, opening in May 1944, until 1949 when the whole estate was sold to Mr Fairfield. The land was farmed for many years, but he let the house as two self-contained flats. On his death the estate was left to Joan Corfield, but in 1986 was acquired by E F Wootton and Sons and the house returned to use as a single property.

—

In the advertisements reproduced on the next page note the number of bottles in the wine cellar, 90 dozen curious Old Ports – 90 dozen that's

over 1,000 bottles; 120 superior Clarets; nearly 300 choice Madeiras; 144 fine golden Sherries, plus the items of silver.



And two following days.

Further particulars will be announced in future advertisements.

RAVENSDEN,

ABOUT FOUR MILES FROM BEDFORD.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY

MR. C. STAFFORD,

At the WHITE LION Public House, Ravensden, on the Kimbolton Road,

On WEDNESDAY, MAY the 9th, 1849,

VALUABLE

CROPS OF GRASS AND SEEDS,

To be mown and carried off, or fed off,

Together with the AFTERMATH, till September 29th, 1849,

The Property of the Executors of the Late Lieutenant Colonel Mackay,

IN THE FOLLOWING LOTS:

LOT 1.—TWO FIELDS called "Bottom Meadows," abutting the turnpike road, 10 Acres.

LOT 2. "Seed Field" of 12 Acres and "Middle Meadow" 5½ Acres ..... 17½ Acres.

LOT 3. "Twenty Acre Field" opposite side of Road ..... 20 Acres.

LOT 4. "The Alders" 12 Acres, and "Dole Meadow" 7½ Acres ..... 19½ Acres.

LOT 5. "Crane's Field" 6 Acres, "Cottage Close" & "Top Green" 6½ Acres 12½ Acres.

LOT 6. "Bottom Green" and "Gaine's Meadow" ..... 4 Acres.

LOT 7. "The Park," and part of "Gaine's Meadow" ..... 10 Acres.

TRAYLE'S FIELD FARM.

LOT 8. "Thirteen Acre Field" ..... 13 Acres.

LOT 9. "Ten Acre Close" ..... 10 Acres.

LOT 10. "The Pond Close" 4 Acres, the Headlands or Grass Walks adjoining 1½ Acres ..... 5½ Acres.

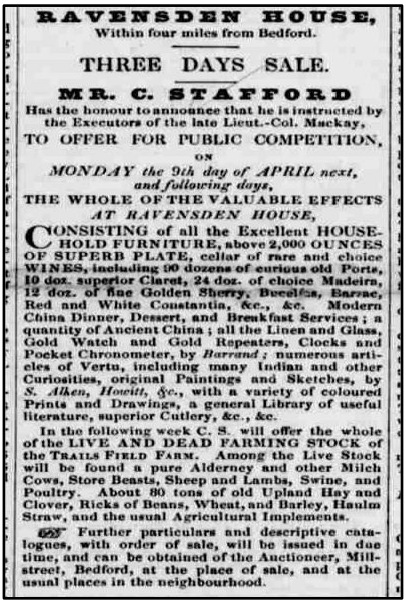
LOT 11. "Home Close" 4½ Acres of Rye Grass, Clover, &c., with old swarth 2 Acres, 3 Poles ..... 6½ Acres.

LOT 12. "Clapham Brook Close" about 12½ Acres Broad Red Clover Seed ..... 12½ Acres.

Sale to commence at Two o'Clock precisely.

The Auctioneer has arranged the Lots so that water may be found in each for the accommodation of the purchasers of the crops.

Twenty per cent deposit will be required, and the remainder of the purchase money to be paid on the 1st of September, on the usual security.



RAVENSDEN HOUSE,

Within four miles from Bedford.

THREE DAYS SALE.

MR. C. STAFFORD

Has the honour to announce that he is instructed by the Executors of the late Lieut.-Col. Mackay,

TO OFFER FOR PUBLIC COMPETITION,

ON

MONDAY the 9th day of APRIL next, and following days,

THE WHOLE OF THE VALUABLE EFFECTS

AT RAVENSDEN HOUSE,

CONSISTING of all the Excellent HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, above 2,000 OUNCES OF SUPERB PLATE, cellar of rare and choice WINES, including 90 dozens of curious old Ports, 10 doz. superior Claret, 24 doz. of choice Madeira, 12 doz. of fine Golden Sherry, Bucellas, Barsac, Red and White Constantia, &c., &c. Modern China Dinner, Dessert, and Breakfast Services; a quantity of Ancient China; all the Linen and Glass, Gold Watch and Gold Repeaters, Clocks and Pocket Chronometer, by *Barraud*; numerous articles of Vertu, including many Indian and other Curiosities, original Paintings and Sketches, by *S. Aiken, Howitt, &c.*, with a variety of coloured Prints and Drawings, a general Library of useful literature, superior Cutlery, &c., &c.

In the following week C. S. will offer the whole of the LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK of the TRAILS FIELD FARM. Among the Live Stock will be found a pure Alderney and other Milch Cows, Store Beasts, Sheep and Lambs, Swine, and Poultry. About 80 tons of old Upland Hay and Clover, Ricks of Beans, Wheat, and Barley, Haulm Straw, and the usual Agricultural Implements.

☞ Further particulars and descriptive catalogues, with order of sale, will be issued in due time, and can be obtained of the Auctioneer, Mill-street, Bedford, at the place of sale, and at the usual places in the neighbourhood.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Angus Mackay in Canada and the Borders Family History Society. **Trevor Stewart**

— O —

Publication Received

Bedford Local History Magazine, No 116, Spring 2026. This issue contains articles on Bedford and Neighbourhood in the Torrington Diaries*; Charles Dickens Visits Bedford*; 'Little Italy' – the Italian Community in Bedford; Promenading in the Park: a pictorial history of Bedford Park & Russell Park; Life in Bedford 110 years ago during the First World War; Arthur Tisdall, VC, a modest hero; Aspects of Bedford's Retail History: *haute couture* in 1950s Bedford – D'Arcy & Rosamunde and The Arcade; plus reviews of new books.

*A version of these articles appeared in HIB, 10.11, Winter 2025/26.

Free to BAALHS members. Price to non-members: £4 direct from the Eagle Bookshop, 16–20 St Peter's Street, Bedford, MK40 2NN, or £6 by post from The Editor, Bob Ricketts, 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP, enclosing a cheque for £6 payable to BAALHS and the address to which the magazine is to be sent. For further information contact the Editor at bob.ricketts57@gmail.com.

– O –

Local History Books

published by our history societies

(Contact the Editor if you wish your society's books to be included)

A History of Some Faith Groups in Bedford. A Special Issue of Bedford Local History Magazine, Edited by Bob Ricketts, CBE. Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society. A4, 92pp, price £5 to non-BAALHS members, available from the Eagle Bookshop, 16–20 St Peter's Street, Bedford MK40 2NN.

At the Long Ford: A History of Langford, by Michael Rutt; Ed, Ted Martin. Paperback, 172pp incl indexes. Price £7 (£10 by post). Langford & District History Society, 2021. Contact John Shipman, j.m.shipman@ntlworld.com. Tel 01462 700650.

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

Bedford History Timeline, by Alan Crawley and Bob Ricketts. Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society. 2019, Paperback, 94pp, 119 illustrations. Price £8, from the Eagle Bookshop, 16–20 St Peter's Street, Bedford MK40 2NN or £10 incl postage from Bob Ricketts, 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP.

Bedford Town Centre Statues, by Stuart Antrobus, £5, on sale only at the John Bunyan Museum shop, Mill Street, Bedford, MK40 3EU. Tel 01234 270303. Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 4pm.

Clophill in the Great War: Those who Died and those who Survived, by Colin Watt. Hardback, A5 landscape, 169pp, £12.50 + £2.50 p& p. For purchase details see: website bit.ly/307uLMM or phone 01525 860922.

Colmworth and Neighbours History: Volume 5, March 2023. Published by Colmworth and Neighbours History Society: www.colmworthhistory.org.uk. 44pp including cover, price £6, plus £3 p & p from
secretary@colmworthhistory.org.uk
or Simon Beverly, Wybridge Cottage, Keysoe, Bedford MK44 2HL
(Cheques made payable to Colmworth and Neighbours History Society.)

Colmworth and Neighbouring Villages: Then and Now, by Colmworth and Neighbours History Society. 2018. Paperback, 46pp, 100+ illustrations, £5 + £3 postage from
secretary@colmworthhistory.org.uk
or Simon Beverly, Wybridge Cottage, Keysoe, Bedford MK44 2HL
(Cheques made payable to Colmworth and Neighbours History Society.)

Henry Clutton: Victorian Architect of Gothic Revival Churches and Country Houses, by Gordon Vowles: Clutton's life and work in Bedfordshire and elsewhere. 2022. Willington Local History Group. £10 + p&p, contact WHLG website: www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

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

Langford Then and Now 2006. Langford & District History Society, 2006. Paperback, 40pp, 80+ photos, £4, Contact John Shipman:
j.m.shipman@ntlworld.com. Tel 01462 700650.

Langford through the Lens Volume 1. Langford & District History Society, reprinted with amendments 2021 to include *Langford: A Village Walk*. Paperback, 138pp, 70 photos, £7. Contact John Shipman, j.m.shipman@ntlworld.com. Tel 01462 700650.

Langford through the Lens, Volume 2. Langford & District History Society. 1992. Paperback, 80 pp, 80+ photos, £3, Contact John Shipman:
j.m.shipman@ntlworld.com. Tel 01462 700650.

Life in Bedford during the Second World War, by Stuart Antrobus. Published by Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society, 2021. A4 paperback, 102pp, incl Appendices 18 pp, Indexes, 13 pp, 85 illustrations. Price £11, from the Eagle Bookshop, 16–20 St Peter's Street, Bedford MK40 2NN or £13, incl postage, from BAALHS (cheque payable to BAALHS), Bob Ricketts, 68 Mendip Crescent, Bedford, MK41 9EP.

The Life and Times of Sir John Gostwick: Tudor Entrepreneur and Bureaucrat, by Gordon Vowles. The life and times of Willington's most famous son, a man who served Wolsey, Cromwell and Henry VIII. 2018. Willington Local History Group. 60pp, £6 + p&p, contact WHLG website: www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

The Parish of St Lawrence, Willington, its Church and Vicars, by Gordon Vowles, traces the history of the church and parish, setting this in the context of wider

social and ecclesiastical developments. 2016. Willington Local History Group. 66pp, £5 + p&p, contact WHLG website:
www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

The Reverend Augustus Orlebar, by Gordon Vowles, covers the life of the long-serving vicar Augustus Orlebar, vicar of Willington for 54 years. 2010. Willington Local History Group. 62pp, £4 + p&p, contact WHLG website:
www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

Willington and the Danes, Myth and Reality, by Gordon Vowles, explores the period when Willington and Bedford stood on the borders between Saxon and Viking territories, covering what has been said and written about the physical traces of the Danish presence in the area. 2013. Willington Local History Group. 36pp, £4 + p&p, contact WHLG website:
www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

Willington and the Russells, by Robert Bollington, covers the period from 1774 to 1902, when Willington formed part of the estates of the Duke of Bedford. 2012. Willington Local History Group. 44pp, £4 + p&p, contact WHLG website:
www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

Willington in the Eighteenth Century, by Robert Bollington, covers the period, when Willington formed part of the estates of the Duke of Marlborough. The book provides an insight into village life at the time, when the village was a small farming community. 2014. Willington Local History Group. 42pp, £4 + p&p, contact WHLG website:
www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

Willington in the First World War, by Robert Bollington, sets out to paint a picture of what the war meant for local people, both those in the forces and those supporting the war effort at home. 2018. 96pp, 27 illustrations, £6 + p&p, contact WHLG website: www.localhistory.me.uk or by email wlhg2022@gmail.com

–