



**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 25 No 4 Dec 2025



Gladys Louise WEST (nee LEECH) circa 1941

BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
A member of the Family History Federation
Founded 1977
Registered Charity No. 281677

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**BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
JOURNAL**



**VOL 25 NO 4 DEC 2025
CONTENTS**

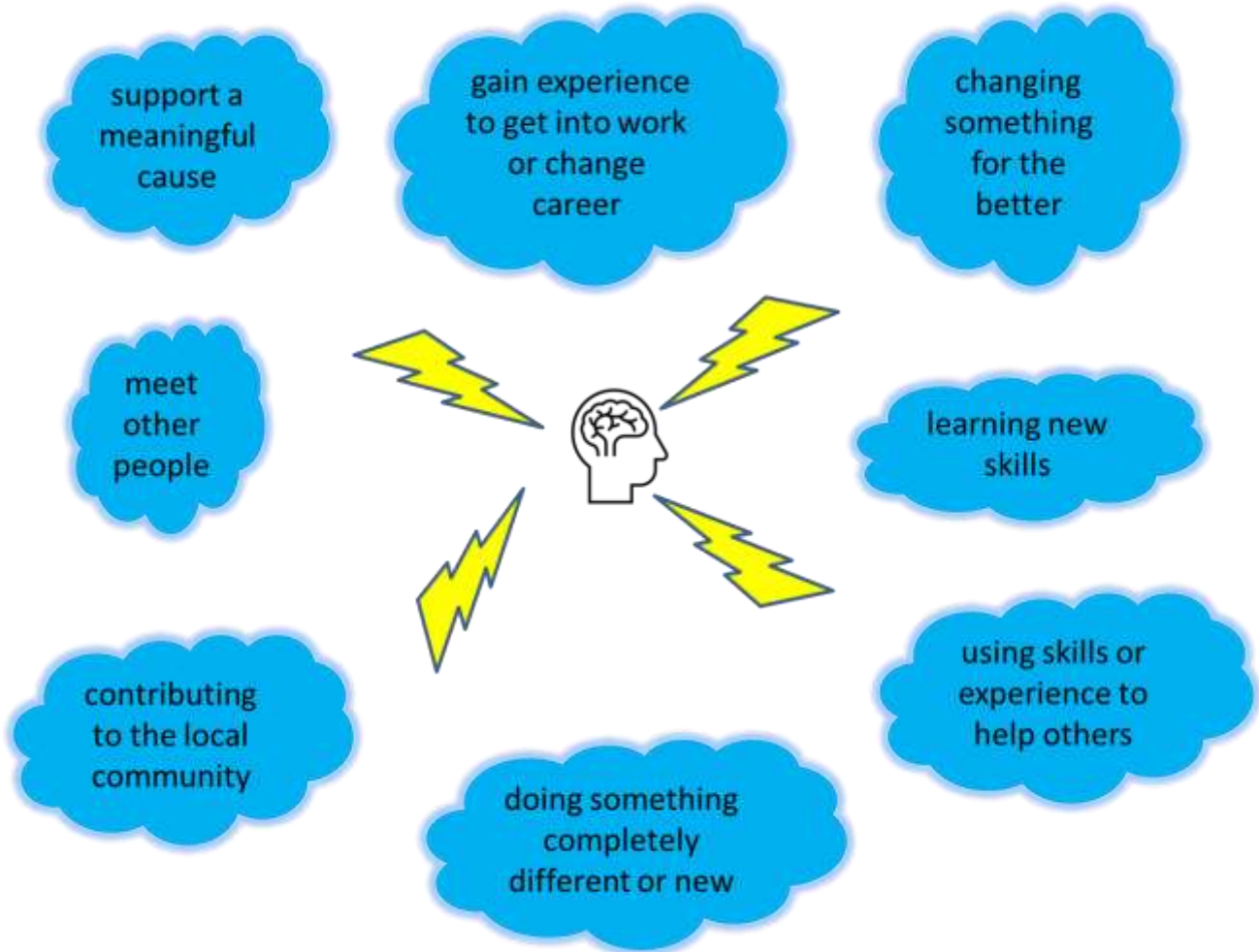
Volunteering with BFHS	2
Visiting Bedford	3
Surname Index for this <i>Journal</i>	4
Publications List	4
Membership Subscriptions 2026	5
Bedfordshire Heritage Tea Towels	5
BFHS Research Centre	6
Talk Programme	8
Dates for your Diary	11
Gladys - Wartime Lumber Jill	12
Led astray by the 1921 Census transcription	15
Bedfordshire Funeral Directors' Records	17
John Phillips of Meppershall - Part 2	18
Do we have your current email address?	22
The Women's Land Army during the Great War	23
Members' Surname Interests	28
Why not write something for the <i>Journal</i> ?	29
Bedfordshire Parish Registers	30
BFHS Email Addresses	back cover

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VOLUNTEERING WITH BFHS

Everyone has their own reasons for volunteering. These include:



All these opportunities are available if you volunteer with the BFHS. Depending on the role, you **don't** need to be:

Resident in the Bedfordshire, England or even Europe.

An expert in genealogy.

A walking encyclopaedia of committee procedures.

You **do** need an enthusiasm for genealogy, an ability to work with others, basic computer skills and an internet connection, and a willingness to offer about two hours of your time each month on society activities.

Get a taste of what is involved by joining one of our monthly Committee Meetings held via Zoom at 7 pm. The meetings normally last less than two hours. You need only stay for the length of time necessary to gain an insight to our way of working and how friendly we are! We will provide instructions on how to join the meeting.

Any contribution of time and enthusiasm is welcome and new committee members are always in demand, but there are some specific roles that we desire to fill and further details can be provided if you are interested (those in bold must be Committee Members):

Vice Chairman

Programme Secretary

Monumental Inscription Publications Coordinator

If you have an inkling of an interest in helping out with the Society then please contact the Chairman, Mark Tresidder, or Secretary, Jo Richardson, via email at **chairman@bfhs.org.uk** or **secretary@bfhs.org.uk**. Alternatively, you can contact any Committee Member (email addresses on rear cover) or talk to us at our monthly meeting.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOU BECOMING A BFHS VOLUNTEER

VISITING BEDFORD

The new '*What's On Bedford Borough*' hub officially opened its doors on Wednesday 28 May, offering a vibrant space that brings together local culture, visitor services and community spirit under one roof.

Find it at 50 Silver Street, Bedford, MK40 1SU; Phone 01234 276573; email **whatson@bedford.gov.uk**; website **bedford.gov.uk**; open Wednesday to Saturday 10 am to 4 pm.

JOURNAL SURNAME INDEX

Below is the Surname Index for this *Journal*, providing you with a rapid way of finding a Surname within this *Journal*. Note that Members' Surname Interests are not indexed. The Surname Index for *Journals* on the BFHS website will be updated in due course.

Name	Page		Name	Page
Abbott	17		Marshall	18-22
Ashwell	17		Nelsey	17
Ayres	17		Neville	17
Blackburn	10		Pestell	19
Brasier	17		Phillips	18-22
Brown	12		Roberts	18-19
Bunker	17		Ruttleton	21
Chapman	18		Ryder	18
Daniels	17		Saunders	17
Darts	15-16		Short	10
Goldhawk	17		Stanghan	20-21
Hallett	10		Talbot	25
Harris	20		Warren	16
Hilltonbury	21		West	12
Hirst	15		Weston	20
Leech	12		Wil(l)son	17-19

PUBLICATIONS LIST

Our Publications include Bedfordshire Parish Records, Marriage Licences, Non-Conformist Registers, Surname Index, Poor Law Paper Index, Journals, Luton General Cemetery Grave Registers, Wills and Members' Handbook. The Publication List is available from our website **bfhs.org.uk/publications**, or you can request a printed copy, see address details on rear cover.

Membership Subscriptions 2026

If you are intending to pay your **2026** membership by Standing Order or Bank Transfer, please drop an email to **treasurer@bfhs.org.uk** to advise your name, post code, payment method and membership type. Your help would be appreciated.

Please use the new Barclays bank details for bank transfers to Bedfordshire Family History Society, using sort code 20-05-73 and account number 93516105. When convenient, please change any standing order from NatWest to Barclays and please remember to cancel your standing order to our NatWest account.

Please note that the 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Society approved an increase in some subscription rates. Please see the rear cover for the 2026 subscription rates.

BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TEA TOWELS

The Society has had a supply of Bedfordshire Heritage tea towels printed and these are sold to raise funds. These tea towels are really too nice to use for drying up; they are beautifully colour printed with some famous Bedfordshire landmarks forming a border for the County map. Even if you do not have any Bedfordshire ancestors, they make ideal gifts, see inside rear cover.

They are 100% cotton and at £5 each can be obtained from the bookstall at members' meetings, by email to **secretary@bfhs.org.uk**, or by post to Lynn Manning at 38 Risborough Road, Bedford, MK41 9QW, Tel. 01234 306482. For UK orders please add **postage and packing** as follows:

Up to 2 tea towels add	£2.10
3 to 4 tea towels add	£2.50

For orders from outside the UK please enquire before ordering. Cheques should be made payable to Bedfordshire Family History Society.

BFHS RESEARCH CENTRE



LOCATION AND PARKING

Bedfordshire Family History Society's Research Centre is now open and located at the Community Voluntary Service offices at 43 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2AA.¹

There is limited parking in the CVS car park at the rear of the building in Trevor Street. Alternative parking is available nearby at Greyfriars Surface Carpark and Allhallows Multi-Storey Car Park.



¹ Map copyright openstreetmap.org, openstreetmap.org/copyright.

RESOURCES

An extensive library that will appeal to family and social historians.

Parish Register transcripts for all historic parishes in Bedfordshire.

Monumental Inscriptions.

Free internet access to genealogical resources including *The Genealogist*.

Microfiche collection including The International Genealogical Index, 1881 Census and Telephone Directories.



FACILITIES

The Research Centre is located on the first floor of the CVS building and can be accessed by a lift.

Kitchen and toilet facilities are available. The kitchen may be used for preparing drinks during your visit.

OPENING HOURS

Our research centre is open to members and non-members by appointment only. We will be open at the following times:

Wednesday and Saturday 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

In addition, we will be opening on some Monday and Tuesday mornings between 9:30 and 12:30. Please check the Research Centre calendar for details.

HOW TO BOOK A VISIT

Please use our Research Centre calendar on the society web page, bfhs.org.uk/researchctr.html, to see details of available appointment times and use the links provided to request an appointment.

Alternative times may be available subject to the availability of volunteers to staff the research centre. Please email Research.Centre@bfhs.org.uk for enquiries.

For members without internet access, bookings can be made by phoning the research centre on 01234 867216 during opening hours. Please note the phone will not be manned outside these times.





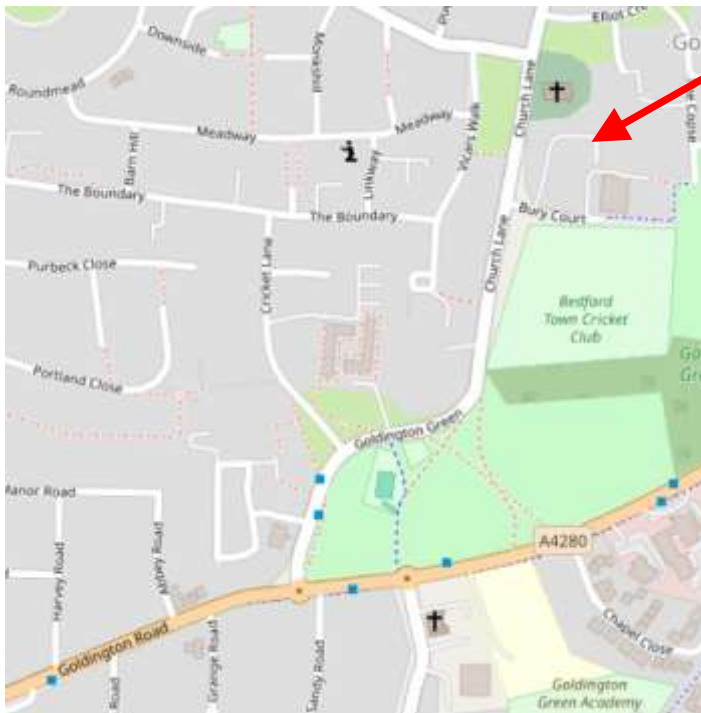
TALK PROGRAMME

All talks are at the new venue of St Mary's Church Hall, Goldington, and virtually via Zoom unless otherwise advised.

Doors open at 7 pm with the talks starting at 7.30 pm.

Our monthly Friday night meetings offer members instructive, interesting, and often amusing talks on subjects that fascinate all interested in history and genealogy in general and are usually particularly relevant to those with a Bedfordshire heritage. We look forward to seeing you in person.

Where possible, talks will be live streamed (Zoom log-in details are shown in the members' portal) or made available later as a video recording on the website in the members' portal, subject to approval by the speaker.



The address of the venue is St Mary's Church Hall, Church Lane, Goldington, Bedford (MK41 0AN for satnavs).²

From Bedford town centre, head East towards Cambridge on the A4280 (was A428) Goldington Rd.

At the mini roundabout at Goldington Green, turn left towards Renhold into Goldington Green Road

Just after the pedestrian crossing the road becomes Church Lane. Take the second on the right, sign-posted Church Hall, then turn immediately left up to the Church car park where you will find the Church Hall.

² Map copyright openstreetmap.org, openstreetmap.org/copyright

TALK PROGRAMME (cont'd)

The Creation of Dickens Christmas Carol

Steve Dimmer

Friday 5 Dec 2025



When Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, the season was not the joyous celebration we know today.

This talk examines how the classic story was written and how it influenced the Victorians and later generations to embrace Christmas.

Reframing Roots

Celia Heritage

Friday 9 Jan 2026

Note date is second Friday of January and will be an online presentation for those meeting in the church hall and available by *Zoom*.



In this unique and deeply insightful talk, Celia brings together her experience as a professional genealogist, therapist, and healer to explore how the echoes of the past continue to shape our present-day thoughts, emotions, and relationships. Through a fascinating case study, she reveals how family traits, beliefs, and emotional patterns can be passed down through many generations - often unconsciously influencing how we see ourselves and those around us. By reframing these inherited stories, we can begin to understand ourselves with greater compassion and, ultimately, find a sense of healing through our ancestry.

Celia is a leading genealogy author, speaker and teacher who has regularly featured on television, radio and in print as she seeks to unravel the mysteries in even the most complex family trees, including the internationally acclaimed BBC TV series *Who Do You Think You Are?* Her areas of specialism are Kent Family History, Pre-1800s Genealogy, Heritage Travel, Maps, Surname History, Death and Burial, Gravestones and Churchyard History. Celia is also a psychological therapist and mind coach, and ties this in with DNA work, offering support for those adversely affected by unexpected DNA results, and anyone who feels displaced or disconnected because of family trauma or emigration.

TALK PROGRAMME (cont'd)

Heroes and Ghosts

Michael Hallett

Friday 6 Feb 2026



This is the story of Michael's grandfather, pictured left, Harold BLACKBURN, a pioneer aviator before World War I and war hero. After the war, scandal struck the family and plunged it into shame for three generations. Along the way, his story was lost, his memorabilia buried for decades.

This brings the story of his amazing career to light through the recognition of unconscious shame affecting multiple generations. Shame affects the

way memories are carried in a family, both in terms of what is remembered - *or allowed to be remembered* - and in terms of what mementos survive.

Researching such events requires a softer approach than conventional, data-driven genealogy. While telling this story Michael shares tips and techniques that are useful for all genealogists.



Michael comes from an aviation family. His grandfather Wing Commander Harold Blackburn MC AFC was a pioneer pilot, air race winner, Britain's first airline pilot and a war hero. Michael's step-grandfather Oswald SHORT was one of the three Short brothers who started the world's first aircraft factory with an order from the Wright brothers and Michael's father, Peter HALLETT, joined the Bristol Engine Co as an apprentice in 1938. During World War II he was a test flight engineer on various Bristol-powered aircraft such as the Beaufighter.

Michael became a software engineer at the largest cannery in the southern hemisphere. In a 30-year IT career he worked for corporate and governmental clients in New Zealand, America, Hong Kong and Europe, working mainly with process manufacturing and inventory systems. Moving onto human processes, Michael now provides online wellbeing courses.

TALK PROGRAMME (cont'd)

Crime & Punishment in the 19th Century

David Annal

Friday 6 Mar 2026



Dave is well-known on the family history circuit. In 2019 he was awarded a Fellowship of the Society of Genealogists and in 2022 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

This talk will introduce you to the records that help us to trace and reconstruct the stories of those ancestors of ours who, for one reason or another, came into contact with the law. To understand the records, we need to set crime in its nineteenth century context so the talk will consider how changes in attitudes towards crime had an impact on the legislation that was passed in an attempt to control it. We will explore the records themselves as we tackle some case studies and we will see that they do not just tell us about the people who committed the crimes: a whole host of other names appear in the records; witnesses, police officers, judges, jurors and, of course, the victims of the crimes. We must view the crimes in the context of our ancestors' lives – only then can we begin to understand what was going on in their lives at the time and start to explore deeper aspects of the story.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Our Society attends a variety of Family History Fairs around the country, and this gives you an opportunity to meet other members of the Society, discuss any brick walls in family research, and browse some of our publications to help your research.

We plan to exhibit at the following event:

Family History Federation 'Really Useful' Family History Show at Burges Hall, St Ives, Cambridgeshire on Saturday 18 April 2026.



In other event news, Mark Tresidder and Mary Wooldridge, pictured left, were looking after our stall at the Oxford Family History Show held on 25 October.

GLADYS - WARTIME LUMBER JILL

Colin West

My mother, Gladys Louise WEST (nee LEECH), was born in the Tuebrook area of Liverpool in 1923. She was the fourth child of six children born to John (Jack) and Elsie Gladys Leech (nee BROWN).

Jack and Elsie ran a fish and chip business in Tuebrook, but when Jack became ill with cancer (he was gassed in the First World War), the business declined, and he subsequently died in 1937 aged forty-four. Elsie was left with six children, the eldest eighteen and the youngest eighteen months – my mother was fourteen. When the second world war broke out in 1939, my mother was working in munitions, firstly in the Edge Lane area of Liverpool, then in neighbouring Bootle.

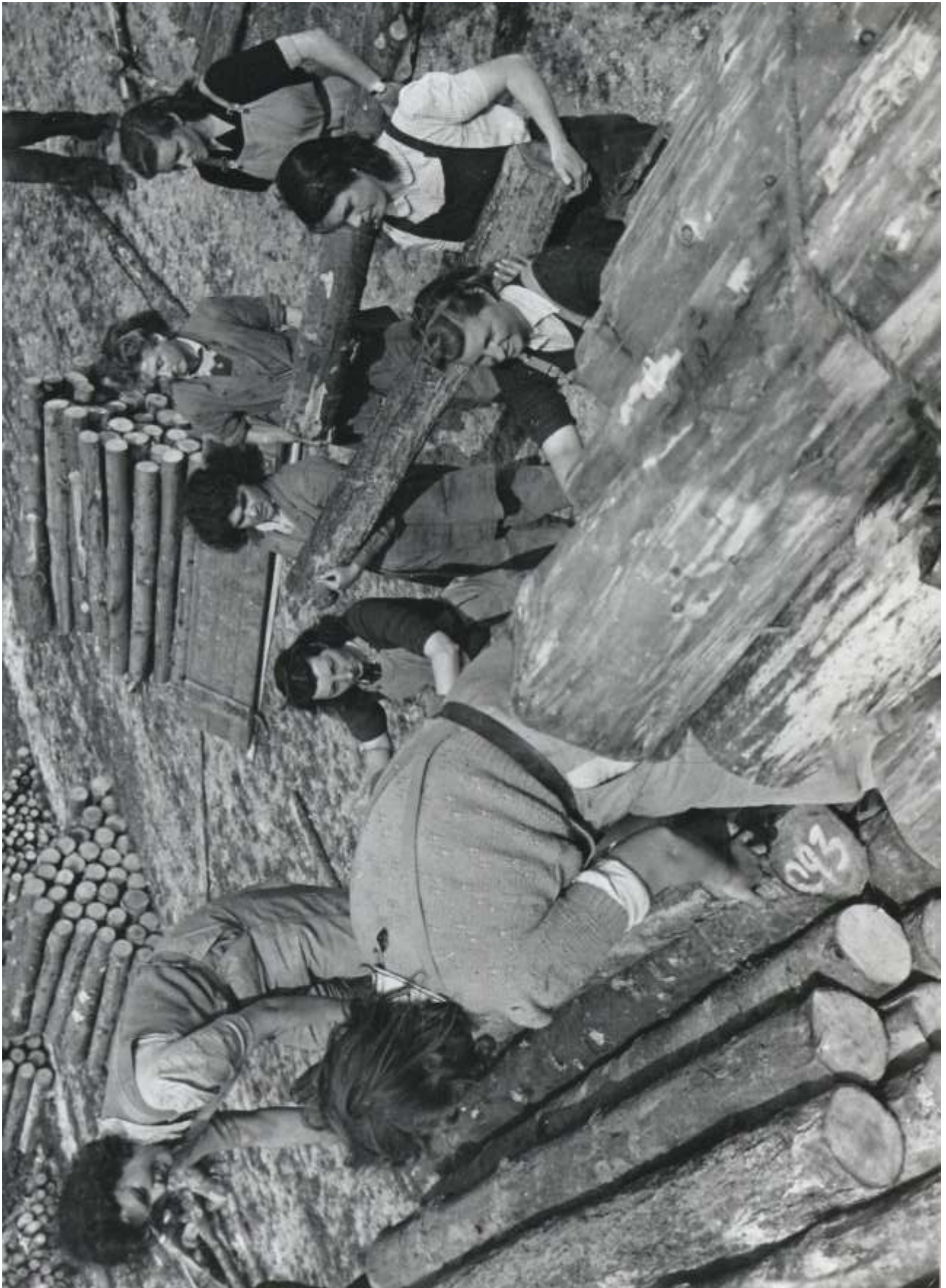
Although very much a city girl, she hankered after the countryside, having cycled to the Lake District and North Wales with her favourite elder brother, Jack. So, in 1941 when she was eighteen years old, and partially to escape the prolonged bombing of Liverpool, she joined the Land Army, as pictured on the front cover, and moved to Bedfordshire. Her first lodgings were in Barton-in the Clay (renamed Barton-le-Clay in 1956) and her tasks were to fell trees in the neighbouring parish of Hexton, albeit in Hertfordshire.

It was here she met my father who was living in the hamlet of Pegsdon, parish of Shillington and adjacent to Hexton. They were married in Liverpool in 1943, and it was soon after that she heard her brother Jack had married in Liverpool in 1944, just before he was involved in the battle of Arnhem, Operation Market Garden.

My mother supposedly joined the Land Army, but she was in the Timber Corps, known colloquially as Lumber Jills. Only in recent years have their work in the war been recognised, and my mother was given a certificate signed by the then Prime Minister, and a lapel badge. See next page for pictures of the Lumber Jills at work circa 1941, with Gladys top right in the first picture and lower centre in the second picture being fed!

Jack had joined the Airborne Division as a stretcher bearer and had said he did not want to fight; he wanted to save and help people. He had previously been involved in campaigns in Narvik in Norway, in Sicily and in North Africa. He displayed a red cross arm band, which I currently have in my possession.

After he married, he told my mother that he would bring his new wife to meet her in Bedfordshire, but this was not to be. In September 1944, he flew into Ede near Arnhem, in a glider, and together with allied forces numbering about two thousand, landed by parachute on Ginkel Heath. It was the intention to capture the bridges over the Rhine in Arnhem.





Jack was shot down as he and a colleague landed. He sustained an injury in his neck and died instantly. His fellow stretcher bearer was shot in the leg and the Captain of the group, was shot in the arm. In recent years, I have spoken to both the Captain (he sent me a copy of his war diary) and his fellow stretcher-bearer. It was thought the German SS were responsible for the attack and Jack's death, but it was later established that it was the Dutch SS!

Jack was buried in Oosterbeek Military Cemetery, in the Netherlands, and his body was never repatriated. My grandmother visited his grave in 1947, but my mother never felt she had closure. To celebrate her eightieth birthday in 2003, my sister and I and our spouses took her to Arnhem and to Oosterbeek to visit Jack's grave - she finally felt at peace. It was quite a moving occasion as we were caught up in the commemorations - almost the sixtieth anniversary.

We visited Ginkel Heath, where there was a re-enactment of the landings and where veterans of the conflict 'buddied' parachutists. It must be remembered that these veterans were about eighty years of age! At the service in the cemetery on the Sunday, children from the schools in Ede laid flowers on every one of the graves. The Dutch people never forgot.

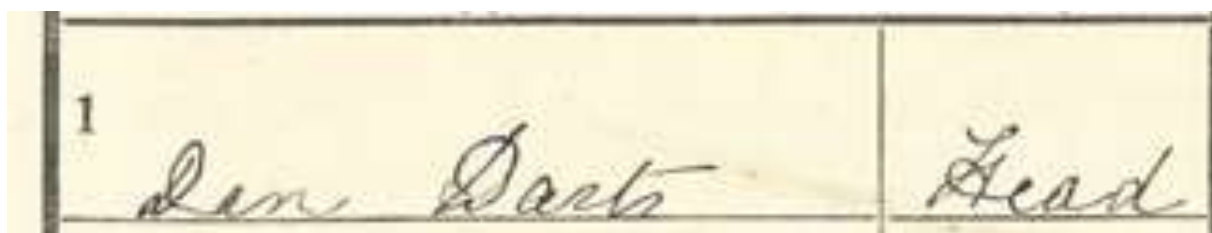
It was truly a memorable occasion, which I too, shall never forget.

LED ASTRAY BY THE 1921 CENSUS TRANSCRIPTION

Jan Darts

Until recently, I have used the 1921 Census sparingly and mainly to resolve uncertainties within my family tree because I did not have a subscription with *FindMyPast*. However, I was delighted when *Ancestry* advised me that the 1921 Census was available within my existing subscription with them. I set about documenting the entries for the DARTS family with a renewed vigour but quickly ran into a confusing world created by mistranscription.

A key issue arose with the record for Dan Darts. His family form a substantial part of my family tree with 10 children produced from his marriage to Ellen HIRST on 4 May 1901 at Saint Mary the Less, Black Prince Road, Lambeth. The transcription of the 1921 Census return for Dan by both *Ancestry* and *FindMyPast* had 'Dan' as 'Den'. An easy mistake to make when the original record is examined, although elsewhere his name is clearly 'Dan', see below:



Signature.....*Dan Darts*
 (Head of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.)

The *Ancestry* transcription had the Residence Street Address as 'Wutton Street, Sandy, Beds' and residence place as 'Cockayne Hatley, Bedfordshire, England'. I was none the wiser looking at the at the address details entered by the Enumerator:

This space to be filled up by the Enumerator.		
Registration District.	Registration Sub-District.	Enumeration District.
<i>175</i> <i>Befflenwade</i>	<i>175.1</i> <i>Befflenwade</i>	<i>7</i>
Name of person responsible for making the return. <i>Mr. Dan Darts</i>		
Postal Address <i>W. Wutton Street</i> <i>Sandy Beds</i>		

I spent many a frustrating hour searching maps for Wutton Street, or similar, close to Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Past experience had shown me that scanning through the Census returns either side of the record of interest could prove fruitful. Close by the record for Dan was a more revealing address for Susan WARREN which included 'Church Lane':

This space to be filled up by the Enumerator.		
Registration District.	Registration Sub-District.	Enumeration District.
<i>175</i> <i>Befflenwade</i>	<i>175.1</i> <i>Befflenwade</i>	<i>7</i>
Name of person responsible for making the return. <i>Mrs. Susan Warren</i>		
Postal Address <i>Church Lane, Wutton Street</i> <i>Sandy, Beds</i>		

An internet search for 'Church Lane, Sandy, Bedfordshire' identified a single candidate of Church Lane in the village of Wrestlingworth. Once this clue was identified it became obvious that 'Wutton Street' was 'Wrestlingworth' and 'Wrestlingworth' was everywhere

in the returns. I concluded that whatever machine learning was involved in the transcription effort it could not cope with meanderings of a word like ‘Wrestlingworth’.

This example of mistranscription emphasised to me the need to widen the search field when reviewing Census returns that are subject to the idiosyncrasies of the Enumerator and the fallibility of the transcriber – human or machine.

BEDFORDSHIRE FUNERAL DIRECTORS’ RECORDS

Paul Woodcraft

I am pleased to report that very soon a further 6000 names will have been added to the Main Index on the Members’ Portal. This brings the total to over 14,000. We are currently working on NEVILLE Ltd ledger 1922 to 1925 and 1929 to 1931 and John SAUNDERS 1931 to 1936 and 1936 to 1941. These should be ready for the Main Index by the end of 2025.

I am currently looking at redacting programmes to prepare the AL&G ABBOTT ledgers from 1945 to 1980 for transcribing. This will be a long process so may be sometime before ready for the Main Index.

I am pleased to advise that Pauline Redpath has agreed to work alongside me with the view of taking on the role of Project Lead sometime in the future. Pauline has completed scanning Neville X843-16-10, 1931 to 1933, well over 500 pages. This will be on the Members Portal shortly. Start on Neville X843-16-11, Jan 1933 to Oct 1934, is imminent. We are always looking for further volunteers to help with this very interesting work. So, if you have the odd half an hour please get in touch.

Are you a keen researcher? Then you could help by seeing if you can find any further Funeral Directors in Bedfordshire. In the Neville ledger for 1929 the following names are noted as being part of the trade. Can you find out any more information on them?

GOLDHAWK & Sons, Kimpton	DANIELS of Flitwick
J AYRES & Son, Hockliffe	WILSON Bros, Shillington
W BRASIER, Barton	P ASHWELL, Dunstable
W A NELSEY & Sons, Markyate	Messrs J O F BUNKER, Flitwick

If you do find any information on these, or any other company, please contact me on **funeral.directors@bfhs.org.uk**. Likewise, if you have any comments on this project.

JOHN PHILLIPS OF MEPPERSHALL – PART 2

FATHER OF FANNY MARSHALL’S SIX BOYS

Allen R Peterson

Part 1 was published in the September 2025 issue of the Journal. For continuity, footnote and Figure numbering continue from Part 1.

Thomas PHILLIPS, John’s Brother

John’s elder brother, Thomas Phillips, was baptized in 1807 the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Phillips of Shillington.²¹ In 1841 Thomas Phillips lived in Clifton Parish, north of Meppershall.²² Twenty years later Thomas’s Clifton household included a wife, a brother, and John WILSON, a twelve-year-old visitor born in Barton, Bedfordshire.²³ John Wilson, perhaps Thomas’s nephew, was Jonathan born in 1848 to Thomas and Susannah (Phillips) WILLSON in Barton.²⁴ She was likely John and Thomas Phillips’s sister.

In 1872, over a year after John Phillips died, William Thomas CHAPMAN of Biggleswade conveyed by deed of covenant a parcel of land with tenements in Meppershall to James ROBERTS of Meppershall, a baker and grocer. The land contained 97 acres and 16 poles ‘formerly in the occupation . . . [of] John Phillips afterwards . . . Thomas Phillips as the administrator of the said John Phillips.’²⁵

Roberts mortgaged Bells Close to John William RYDER. The land comprised 97 acres and 16 poles on the northeast side of a cottage on Hall Dyke Lane in Meppershall - the same land Chapman had conveyed to Roberts. It was formerly in the occupation of ‘John Phillips recently of the said Thomas Phillips as his administrator.’²⁶ Bells Close was certainly the 98 acres John Phillips occupied in 1861 and the 93 acres farmed in 1871.

²¹ Bishop’s transcripts for Shillington, 1602–1873, baptisms, Thomas Phillips, 21 June 1807; BRO.

²² 1841 England census, Bedfordshire, Clifton Ph., pop. sch., Biggleswade Reg. Dist., ED 9, bk. 6, fol. 9r, p. 12, Thomas Phillips household; HO107/3, TNA.

²³ 1861 England census, Bedfordshire, Clifton Ph., pop. sch., Biggleswade Reg. Dist., ED 10, fol. 43v, p. 14, sch. 61, Thomas Phillips household; RG9/997, TNA.

²⁴ Birth certificate for Jonathan Willson, Mar quarter 1849, entry 234, 20 Dec 1848, Luton Reg. Dist.; 6/119, GRO.

²⁵ Bedfordshire, Deed of covenant, William Thomas Chapman to James Roberts, conveyance, 30 Dec 1872, recorded 31 Dec 1872; Z858/21/1, BARS.

²⁶ ‘Bedfordshire Archives Service Catalogue,’ *Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service* (<http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk/Details/archive/110048537>), Bedfordshire, Deed abstract, James Roberts to William Thomas Chapman, mortgage, 31 Dec 1872; Z858/21/2, BARS. Pamela Birch, England, to author, email, 17 Sept 2020; Pamela Birch, Archivist for the Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service, Bedford, Bedfordshire, UK. Pamela indicated the deed cannot be photocopied because of its size and condition. The online abstract wording from the deed clarifies John Phillips’s association with the property: ‘All of which said premises containing on the whole 97a 16p and formerly in

Thomas died in 1891 at eighty-four.²⁷ Trustee Jonathan Wilson of Barton stood ‘possessed of the residue of the said sale [of Thomas Phillips’s estate] in trust for George MARSHALL, James Marshall and Arthur Marshall (being three brothers) all of Shillington aforesaid in equal shares.’²⁸ George, James, and Arthur were three of four boarders who lived with John Phillips in 1871.

Jonathan Wilson paid Thomas Phillips’s estate duty. His real property in Shillington Parish was sold to pay debts, legacies, and funeral expenses. George, James, and Arthur Marshall each received £10 from the sale.²⁹

Fanny Marshall’s Six Sons

Fanny Marshall had six boys - all surnamed Marshall. None of their baptismal entries name a father, the custom for illegitimate births recorded in Victorian England. The first two were baptised in Northill Parish, the last four in Meppershall:

- i. John—baptised 19 May 1861; died 18 September 1868, age nine;³⁰
- ii. George—baptised 19 May 1861;³¹
- iii. Thomas—baptised 20 April 1865; died 14 September 1868, age three;³²
- iv. James—baptised 19 September 1868;³³
- v. William—baptised 19 September 1868; died 6 February 1877, age eleven, in the Union Workhouse, ‘Son of Fanny Marshall a Straw Plaiter (deceased)’;³⁴

occupation of Charles PESTELL since of Thomas and John Phillips then of the said John Phillips recently of the said Thomas Phillips as his administrator and now of James Roberts.’

²⁷ Death certificate for Thomas Phillips, June quarter 1891, entry 306, 2 June 1891, Biggleswade Reg. Dist.; 3b/279, GRO.

²⁸ Principal Probate Registry, London, will, Thomas Phillips, 25 Feb 1891, proved 4 July 1891.

²⁹ Board of Inland Revenue, Estate Duty Office, Registers of Legacy Duty, surnames K–R, fols. 3301–3450, fol. 3335, Thomas Phillips, 25 Aug 1892; IR26/3335, TNA.

³⁰ Parish registers for Northill, Bedfordshire, baptisms, 1813–1885, p. 16, entry 126, John Marshall (1861); P 10/1/8–9, BRO. Death certificate for John Marshall, Sept quarter 1868, entry 59, 18 Sept 1868, Biggleswade Reg. Dist.; 3b/262, GRO.

³¹ Parish registers for Northill, Bedfordshire, baptisms, 1813–1885, p. 16, entry 125, George Marshall (1861); P 10/1/8–9, BRO.

³² Parish registers and poor law records for Meppershall, baptisms, 1813–1904, p. 2, entry 13, Thomas Marshall (1865); P 29/1/3, BRO. Death certificate for Thomas Marshall, Sept quarter 1868, entry 54, 14 Sept 1868, Biggleswade Reg. Dist.; 3b/261, GRO.

³³ Parish registers and poor law records for Meppershall, baptisms, 1813–1904, p. 10, entry 76, James Marshall (1868); P 29/1/3, BRO.

³⁴ Parish registers and poor law records for Meppershall, baptisms, 1813–1904, p. 10, entry 77, William Marshall (1868); P 29/1/3, BRO. Death certificate for William Marshall, Mar quarter 1877, entry 296, 6 Feb 1877, Ampthill Reg. Dist.; 3b/237, GRO.

vi. Arthur—baptised 3 December 1871.³⁵

None of the boys' births were registered at the General Register Office.³⁶ John, Thomas, and William died in childhood. The three surviving Marshall brothers - all Meppershall-born - lived together in 1881 at Phillips's Cottages in Shillington: George, twenty; James, eighteen; and Arthur, eleven.³⁷ They were the brothers that received £10 each from their uncle, Thomas Phillips.

Three Brothers

In 1878 G[eorge] Marshall was the proprietor of a cottage at Green End occupied by his brother, James.³⁸ He probably received the cottage from his uncle, Thomas Phillips, after Fanny's death in 1875. In 1888 George of Shillington married Clara WESTON. 'Fanny Marshall' is written in the space on the marriage record reserved for George's father's name; 'mother' is written in the space for the father's rank or profession.³⁹ George died a smallholder of Green End in 1926. Widow Clara received his real estate.⁴⁰

James Marshall of Shillington married Sarah Elizabeth HARRIS in 1888 in Meppershall. 'Fanny Marshall (mother),' a housekeeper, is written in the space on the marriage record reserved for James's father.⁴¹ James died in 1922, a municipal road labourer of 54 Raydon Street in St. Pancras.⁴² In 1939 his widow, Sarah E Marshall, resided with Arthur Marshall's family at 52 Raydon Street.⁴³

Arthur Marshall of St Anne Brookfield, Highgate Hill, St Pancras, married Pamela STANGHAN on 3 June 1895 in Upper Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire. Arthur's father is

³⁵ Parish registers and poor law records for Meppershall, baptisms, 1813–1904, p. 20, entry 157, Arthur Marshall (1871); P 29/1/3, BRO.

³⁶ 'Search the GRO Online Index,' birth database, *General Register Office* (https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes_search.asp). Negative search for John Marshall, 1857–61; George Marshall, 1859–63; James Marshall, 1861–68; Thomas Marshall, 1863–67; William Marshall, 1865–69; and Arthur, 1867–71.

³⁷ 1881 England census, Bedfordshire Co., Meppershall, pop. sch., Ampthill Reg. Dist., ED 2, fol. 41v, p. 22, sch. 118, George Marshall household; RG11/1633, TNA.

³⁸ 'Bedfordshire, England, Valuation Records, 1838–1929,' *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61323>), Bedfordshire Co., Shillington, Ampthill Reg. Dist., Valuation records, p. 25, entry 343, James Marshall occupier, G. Marshall owner, cottage at Green End; VLA3/15/1, BARS.

³⁹ Marriage certificate for Marshall-Weston, Mar quarter 1888, entry 82, 31 Mar 1888, Ampthill Reg. Dist.; 3b/449, GRO.

⁴⁰ Death certificate for George Marshall, June quarter 1926, entry 299, 1 June 1926, Ampthill Reg. Dist.; 3b/356, GRO. Principle Probate Registry, London, will, George Marshall, 5 Oct 1920, proved 3 Aug 1926.

⁴¹ Marriage certificate for Marshall-Harris, Dec quarter 1888, entry 210, 25 Dec 1888, Biggleswade Reg. Dist.; 3b/755, GRO.

⁴² Death certificate for James Marshall, June quarter 1922, entry 58, 13 May 1922, St. Pancras Reg. Dist.; 1b/142, GRO.

⁴³ 1939 England and Wales Register, sch. 216, Sarah E. Marshall household; RG101/802E, TNA.

1845 . Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Upper Greenham in the County of Bedford

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
160	June 3rd 1895	Arthur Marshall and Pamela Stanghan	25	Bachelor	Labourer	S. Anne's Church, Upper Greenham	John Phillips	Deceased
			25	Spinster	—	Upper Greenham	John Stanghan	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by me, Arthur Marshall

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Arthur Marshall and Pamela Stanghan in the presence of us, John Stanghan and Georgina Rucklidge by me, Arthur Marshall

Figure 3. Arthur Marshall's marriage certificate showing Arthur's father, John Phillips.

shown as John Phillips, deceased, on his marriage certificate,⁴⁴ see figure 3 left. In 1939 Arthur Marshall, an old age pensioner, born on 6 August 1869, lived in St. Pancras, London, with Pamela born on 23 September 1869.⁴⁵

Why Did John and Ann Not Divorce?

Before 1857 divorce in England was only obtainable through an Act of Parliament. Divorce first became available in the 1660s, but it was difficult and expensive. There were only 300 or so individuals who succeeded in obtaining a divorce between the 1660s and 1857. Only four women ever obtained a divorce by means of private Act of Parliament. A man might obtain a [release from the bond of marriage] from Parliament by proving his wife committed adultery. A wife, on the other hand, had to prove against her husband not only adultery but also bigamy or incest or exaggerated cruelty.

The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857 made divorce available to all. However, 'Adultery was the sole ground for divorce, and a wife needed to prove not only that her husband had committed adultery but also an aggravating factor (cruelty, desertion, sodomy, bestiality, adulterous rape or incest).' It was not until 1923 that the amended law permitted a wife to divorce based on her husband's adultery alone. After 1857 the number of divorces remained low, with only a few hundred granted each year. Nevertheless, a divorce did not grant either party the right to remarry.⁴⁶

There was little incentive for Ann and John to divorce. Ann would have had to prove an aggravating factor in addition to John's adultery; John would not have been able to marry Fanny, if he divorced Ann. Perhaps it was easier for them to separate.

⁴⁴ Marriage certificate for Marshall-Stanghan, June quarter 1895, entry 160 in 1895, 3 June 1895, Ampthill Reg. Dist.; 3b/745, GRO.

⁴⁵ 1939 England and Wales Register, sch. 215, Arthur Marshall household; RG101/802E, TNA.

⁴⁶ Rebecca Probert, *Marriage Law for Genealogists, the Definitive Guide*, 2nd ed. (Kenilworth, U.K.: Takeaway Publishing, 2016), 46, 48. Also, Margaret K. Woodhouse, *The American Journal of Legal History*, vol. 3 (July 1959), 262.

Conclusions

John Phillips fathered six illegitimate sons with his unmarried housekeeper, Fanny Marshall. He was identified as John and George Marshall's father in 1861. Arthur's marriage record indicates his father was John Phillips. George, James, and Arthur benefitted from John's estate administered by their uncle, Thomas Phillips. These records imply that middle sons Thomas, James, and William were also John's sons.

Fanny was raised near John and Ann Phillips in Northill Parish. In 1859 John moved to Meppershall without Ann. The move may have been precipitated by John's involvement with Fanny, whose first child, John Marshall, was born in 1859.

After John Phillips's death in 1871, Fanny occupied his freehold house at Green End, probably where she died in 1875. Three years later her son, George, owned a Green End cottage occupied by his brother, James.

When John began living with Fanny in Meppershall, Ann withdrew to her birthplace, Hitchin. She maintained her married status while living with her widowed sister until her own death in 1873. Although John's 1861 and 1871 domiciles appeared a normal English farmer's household, complete with a domestic servant, they were not. He fathered Fanny's six boys whilst his estranged wife lived in neighbouring Hertfordshire.

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THE FORGOTTEN FIRST CROP! THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY DURING THE GREAT WAR.

Helen Frost.

Helen Frost gave a talk to the Society on 7 Feb about the incredible story of the 'Tank Banks' which aimed to raise as much money for the war effort through investments in War Bonds and War Savings Certificates. This talk was not recorded, and no summary of the talk is available. However, Helen has kindly provided this article on the Women's Land Army during WW1. Bedfordshire Archives holds many resources on the Women's Land Army for both WW1 and WW2 if this area of family research is of interest.



The first time that I saw a photograph of a Landswoman of the Great War, it quite literally stopped me in my tracks. I studied the expression on her face as she proudly and confidently posed for a studio portrait; one of pride, composure and stoicism but also, it struck me that she was not actually looking at the camera when it was taken. Purpose not vanity perhaps?

It was a pivotal moment that kick-started further research but one that also propelled me into the world and times that this inspirational 'army' of women lived in and through and more profoundly, it changed the course of my life.

The Women's Land Army of the Great War was pioneering in the sense that it not only managed to break through the rigid class barriers and conventions of the society of the day but also that the women who joined it had to continually strive to overcome the male prejudices, entrenched views and gender stereotypes that existed regarding the jobs that a woman could and in fact should do.

This relatively small army of women, (23,000 at its peak, although some figures state a lower figure) were in the main, drawn away from stable, well-paid suburban and city employment, their university education or made the decision to leave a comfortable, sometimes sheltered background to work for the first time in their lives. Recruitment was predominantly aimed at middle to upper-middle class women; for whom working on the land would almost certainly be a new experience.

However, in contrast, women at the other end of the social scale who were in domestic service, (often born into large families) saw the opportunity for both a new challenge and an escape, albeit from one type of exhausting work to another!

Many women, although finding the work incredibly hard physically were actually able to cope with it and earned the respect of the men they worked with. For others, the laborious manual work proved too demanding, and they did not remain in land worker organisations or the Women's Land Army for very long due to their pre-conceived, idealistic expectations not actually being borne out in reality.

Surprisingly, to the astonishment of many farmers of the time, the 'women of superior education' who came forward, readily rolled their sleeves up and consented freely quite often to take a drop in wage to stave off potential starvation in Britain. There was no time or place for complacency. The motivation that drove the Women's Land Army, (to assist with and to maintain food production and supply during a prolonged conflict) became its appeal and was in effect exactly the same as for the men; civilian patriotism and wanting to serve.

With the Great War dragging on into its fourth ghastly year, food shortages were biting ever harder into the everyday diets of the civilian population. Due to a hugely successful German U-boat campaign that targeted merchant ships, (as opposed to warships in 1915/1916) food shortages were becoming severe in both urban and rural areas. Starvation was a genuine threat and sadly a reality by 1917, hence the urgency

to form a regulated, civilian organisation that of course eventually became the Women's Land Army.

This was an army that had no precedent, rule book for reference or lessons to learn from as there had not been a crisis quite like the one that faced the country at the time; certainly not one that had required the formation of such a distinct army.

A name that blazes out from the dusty history books is that of Meriel Talbot or Dame Meriel Lucy Talbot DBE as she became. Meriel was a fascinating figure who came to nationwide prominence as the first female Director, appointed by the then Minister of Agriculture, Lord Selbourne.

For this army of women to be taken seriously and attract recruits, it had been decided that it needed to be 'run by women, for women.' Hindsight tells us that this was indeed a sagacious decision!

Rallies took place in towns and cities across the nation - always attempting to recruit interested women. Parades of recruits in their practical land worker uniforms, (the like of which had never been seen before) held banners aloft with stark statements on them, 'The food you grow is better than the food produced by others.'

Also, terms like 'You can join the Land Army for six months' enticed and attempted to persuade the unsure to come forward. Initially women who signed on the dotted line signed up for the duration of the war but this had an obvious effect on the numbers of women coming forward, so the terms were soon changed.

Women could volunteer at the rallies or go to Post Offices and Employment Exchanges to apply for the enrolment forms.

Obtaining three references slowed down the recruitment process, leading many women to be employed privately or in an 'unofficial' capacity. Candidates would appear before an interview panel and require a medical too. Their mental and physical suitability for work were also assessed at this stage too. The rejection rate stood at roughly 50% of the 45,000 women that initially applied to serve.

If a woman had previous training, she would be placed almost immediately on a farm. If not, they would be sent to a training centre, (247 of these had been set up all over the country by late 1917).

The isolation that many recruits felt and frequent lack of acceptance into tightly-knit rural communities proved a hard obstacle to overcome for some women. Years later, women recalled a deep-rooted feeling of being barely 'tolerated'. For others, strong memories and the pull of their childhood country-based roots drew them back again. Many married countrymen and remained in the countryside.

Many women grew up in workers' cottages on country estates. They were often drawn back to the land having experienced their adult life in London. Despite these fond memories, being in good health and of a strong disposition, they often admitted that

they had not fully realised the extent of what the Women's Land Army was going to ask of them. They often had to work under hard taskmasters, and it inevitably proved too much for some women, and they had no choice but to leave the organisation having given it their best attempt.

It was thanks to the efforts of civilians too, who, through campaigns such as 'The Allotment Campaign' also produced huge amounts of extra food on land acquired by local authorities in late 1916 for the sole purpose of food cultivation. In addition, the new labour force of women who had joined the Women's Land Army enabled the production and gathering of a successful potato and wheat harvest in 1917, (prices of potatoes subsequently halved).

The women also had options after they were demobilised, (which was on 30th November 1919) and were encouraged to remain in farming. They were also offered settlement overseas in various countries; an offer which some women took up and continued to farm. For others they joined the newly formed National Association of Landswomen and grabbed the continuing opportunities offered to them with both hands after demobilisation.

Others naturally returned to their former occupations, but some remained on the land and made their life there.

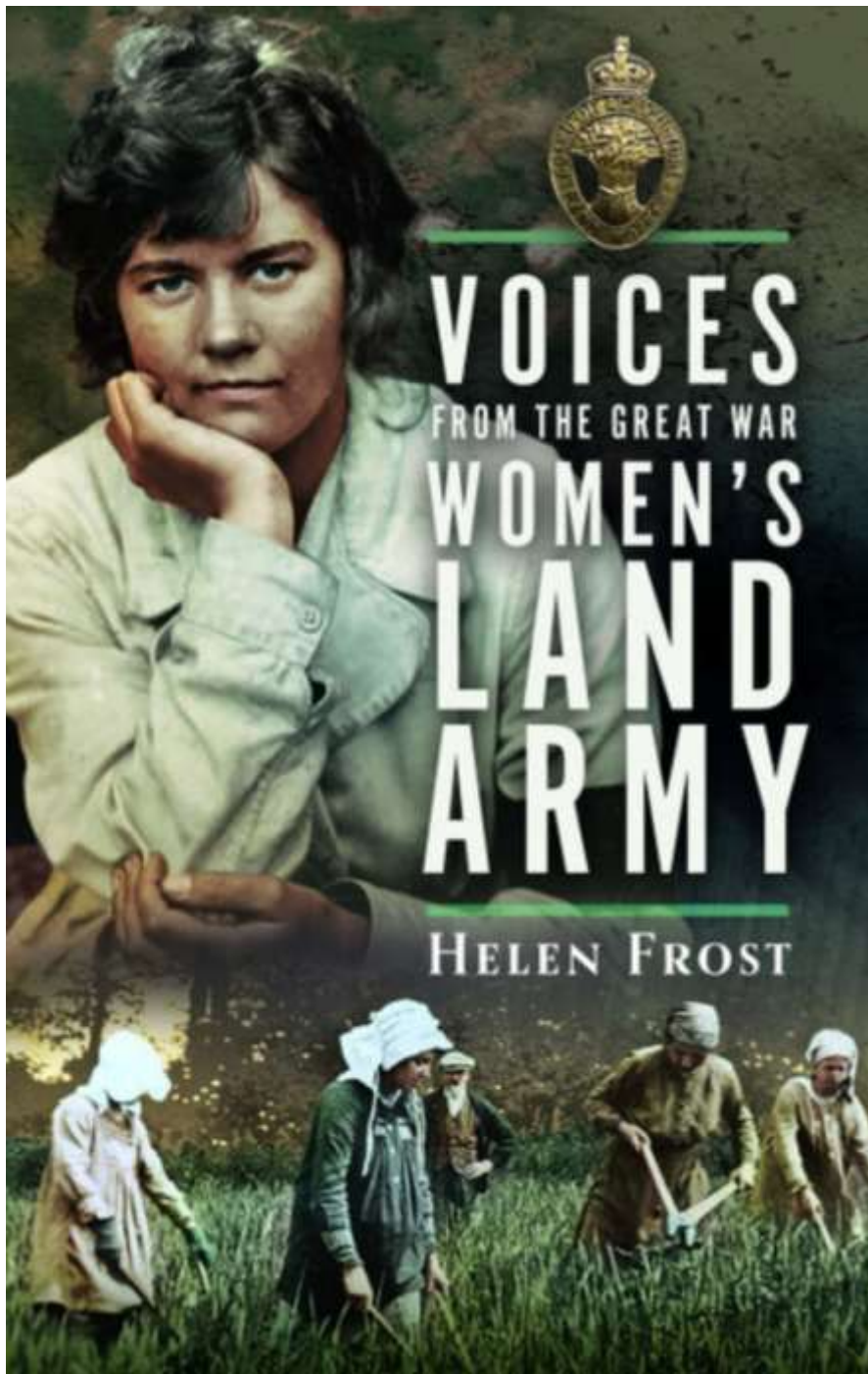
Perhaps most tellingly though, in just a few years, all of them in their own individual way had made such a significant contribution to the war effort as 'women in their own right'.

The respect for how these women literally stepped into the shoes of menfolk is huge. They are inspiring and remain relevant to this day. They deserve recognition and to be rightly remembered alongside their later counterparts. After all, less than 20 years later, they were formed again after the war that was supposedly to end all wars!

Awards were given at the time for long and good service, devotion to duty and bravery whilst serving. But as the decades passed by the contribution that they made to the nation at a time of genuine crisis is rarely commemorated in the same breath as their later counterparts, being remembered in words but sadly not bronze on the Women's Land Army Memorial at The National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire.

It should however be remembered that they were indeed the first, vital crop of 'awakened women' which undoubtedly paved the way for their later counterparts.

Lest we ever forget this.



You can read more about the Women's Land Army in *Voices from the Great War Women's Land Army*, Helen Frost, Published by Pen & Sword Books Ltd (18 November 2024).

MEMBERS' SURNAME INTERESTS

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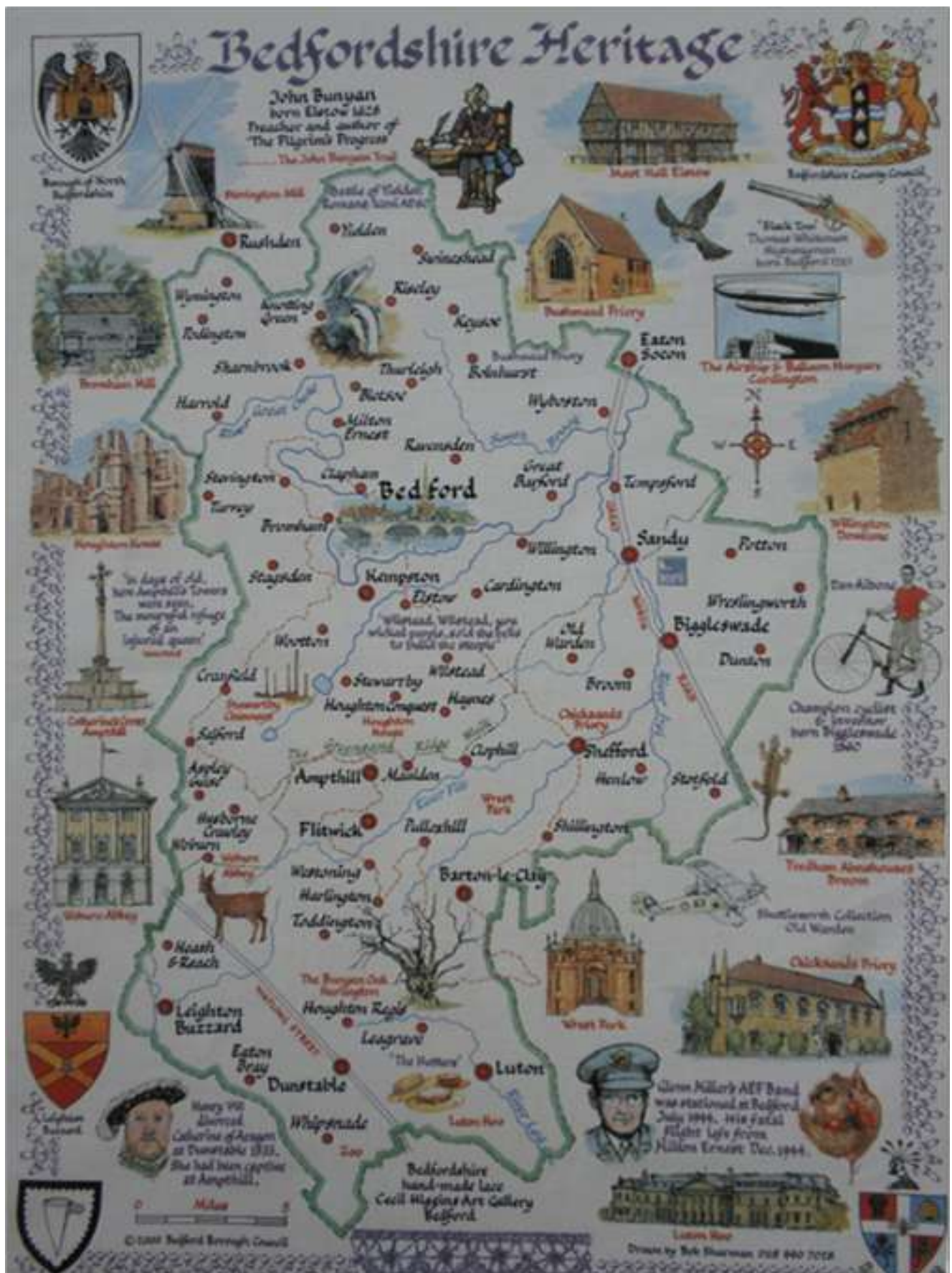
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1. Where it is needed by the independent examiner in his inspection of our financial records.
2. Where it must be supplied to HMRC, e.g. in connection with gift aid submissions.
3. Where we are required to do so by law.

If you have any questions or concerns over the data held, please contact the Information Manager.