



**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 25 No 1 Mar 2025



Gaol Register photograph of George Bennett, September 1860

(Courtesy of Bedfordshire Archives, Ref QGV10/4/021)

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**



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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.

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Membership Subscriptions

If you are intending to pay your **2025** 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.

Our new account with Barclays will enable us to operate an account with dual authorisation online banking. This will simplify paying many of our society expenses. In the meantime, we will continue to maintain our NatWest bank account.

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.

BFHS VOLUNTEER VACANCIES

Our society cannot exist without its committee members who volunteer their time to support the functions of the society. Paul Woodcraft has indicated that he would like to step down from his roles as Journal Distribution Manager, and Funeral Directors Project Leader, and we are also seeking a Monumental Inscription Publications Coordinator.

The committee usually meets on the third Friday of each month via Zoom at 7 pm. Meetings usually last less than two hours and involve the dealing of business to run the society. Please feel free to observe the zoom meeting, under no obligation, and see how the committee works. For log-in details for a zoom committee meeting, please contact Peter Sharp at **treasurer@bfhs.org.uk**. Copies of Microsoft 365 will be provided to committee members if required.

Below is a list of areas where we need help. If you have any queries regarding any of these roles, or wish to offer help, 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 talk to us at meetings.

Journal Distribution Manager



Due to the pending retirement of the incumbent, the above position will be coming vacant shortly and we are therefore looking for a person or persons to take on this duty.

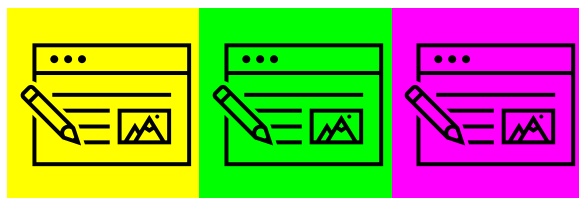
A full role description is available, but the basic duties are as follows:

- Collect or receive the journals from the printers.
- Print labels to send journals to members.
- Send emails with PDF copy of journal to those who have elected to receive them by PDF.
- Send emails with PDF copy to Swap Societies.
- Receive and record Swap journals and send on to Webmaster.
- Receive, check, and record requests for Access to our Members Portal then send on to Webmaster to issue a password.

At present, assembly of labels, journals, stamps, and envelopes for postal distribution is done by a second person.

You will require a computer/laptop with a printer and an internet connection. Time involved is a few hours each month.

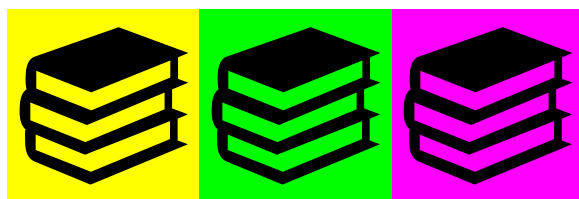
Funeral Directors' Records Project Leader



We are also looking for someone to lead our small team working on Funeral Directors' Records. The project involves research into the Funeral Directors of Bedfordshire both past and present, and arranging digitisation, transcription, and indexing of their records to put on our Members Only part of our website.

You will require a computer/laptop and an internet connection. Scanning equipment will be provided by the Society. Time required can be as little or as much as you can give with no set targets.

Monumental Inscription Publications Coordinator



We are looking for someone who can lead a team to co-ordinate the publication of Monumental Inscription transcripts that the Society has taken. The role involves management of our MS Access database of Monumental Inscriptions, co-ordination of volunteers to input and check transcriptions to the database and preparation of booklets for publication for the completed transcriptions.

Vice Chairman



This role is currently vacant and is required to support the Chairman's activities in running the society.

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR 2

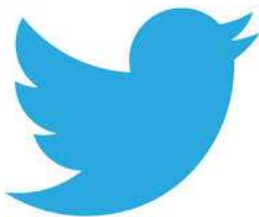
This year will see the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2, with Victory in Europe (VE Day) marked on 8 May and Victory over Japan (VJ Day) marked on 15 August (UK dates).

In recognition of this significant anniversary, we invite you to share your family history during WW2. This could be simply by telling us of the family members who served during the war and those who were among the fallen. Or perhaps you have a more detailed story to tell of your family and of those who served during this period of our history? This is an opportunity to have your family story published.

All contributions are welcome and will be published in the June, September, and December issues of the *Journal*. Photographs of events and people are particularly welcome.

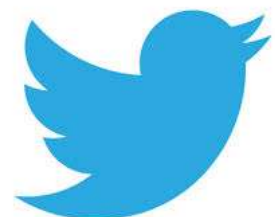
Send your contributions to journal@bfhs.org.uk. The closing dates for the June, September, and December issues of the *Journal* are 30 April, 31 July, and 31 October, respectively.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



We're on Twitter!
Come and say hello.

www.twitter.com/BedsFHS



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 (4 hours free parking).



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.

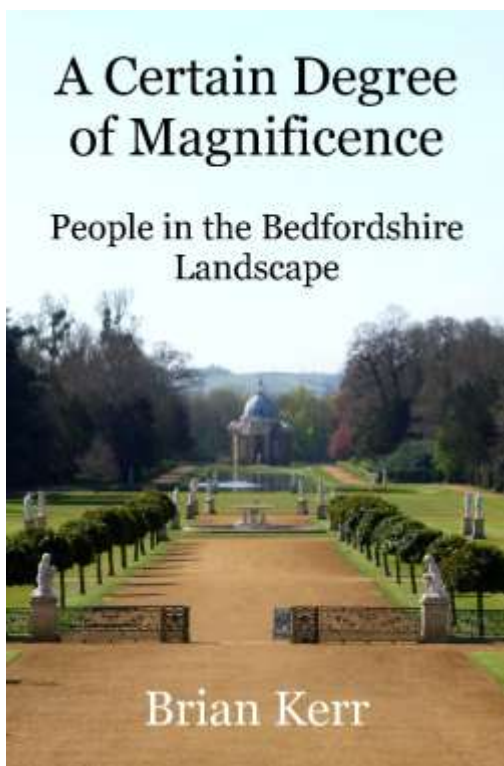
² Map copyright openstreetmap.org, openstreetmap.org/copyright

The Story of Old Warden Abbey
Friday 7 March 2025
Margaret Roberts

An introduction to the Cistercian monastery, its history, and place in the Bedfordshire countryside. Warden Abbey was founded in 1135, but on the orders of Henry VIII, the buildings were flattened in the mid-16th century, leaving behind nothing more than a few bumps in the ground and a story begging to be told.

After graduating in Library Studies, Margaret Roberts spent her career with the Ministry of Defence, followed by management roles with The Royal British Legion and the NHS. Now retired, she spends her time volunteering at Warden Abbey Vineyard, a community project in Bedfordshire.

People in Bedfordshire Landscape
Friday 4 April 2025
Brian Kerr



Brian Kerr trained as a soil scientist and has spent most of his career working and writing on landscape and agricultural topics both in the British Isles and overseas. Now based in Ampthill he has taken an interest in countryside issues in Bedfordshire and is also a tutor at the Rothsay Education Centre in Bedford. This presentation traces the history of the Bedfordshire countryside and is illustrated by a varied selection of landscape slides. The talk places people at the centre of the landscape story and provides examples of how individuals have contributed to the making of the countryside which we see today. This talk is based on a recent book published in 2018 and begins with the evidence for the arrival of the early farmers along the east-west route ways into the centre of England, especially along the dry chalk tracks of the Icknield Way. This historical account then quickly moves to the impact

of Roman settlers especially farming settlements along the major rivers such as the Ouse and Ivel. The Norman invasion brought significant landscape change including the first documentation of settlement in the Domesday Book, the development of deer parks and the management of rabbit warrens. This rapid tour of Bedfordshire landscape history briefly illustrates the impact of the field enclosure and the creation of parkland landscapes such as Woburn.

One of Our Own
Friday 2 May 2025
David Duker



David Duker has held a life-long passion for the generation of people who overcame the huge challenge of the Second World War. From a young age he has been captivated by the many stories of human endeavour, with his particular fascination being on the subject of the Battle of Britain. The talk itself is titled 'One of Our Own' and tells the quite incredible story of St Neots Battle of Britain pilot, Squadron Leader Victor EKINS DFC. David has been able to tell his story as the Ekins family allowed him access to the wartime diaries that he meticulously kept during those arduous war years and that lay unread for over 80 years. The book was published in July 2023 and has gone on to be an Amazon best seller.

BFHS AGM and short talk (tba)
Friday 6 Jun 2025

BOOK REVIEW

Mary Wooldridge

Dunstable in 50 Buildings by Paul Rabbitts. Published by Amberley Publishing (2024). Price circa £14.

A great concept for a book. I loved it, beautiful pictures, taken on a gorgeous sunny day and so much history about each building.

I have many books about Dunstable on my bookshelves but in this book, I learned lots of facts that I did not know.

You have a map at the start of the book pinpointing where each building is making it easy to walk around the town and visit each building in turn using this book.

Paul Rabbitts tempts the reader to find out more information about these buildings. He adds little snippets from history about them. Sometimes delving into the family history of the owners or how the building fits into the local history of Dunstable.

I will not tell you anymore, just leave you to read it for yourself. This is for local and family historians alike, something for everybody.

IN MEMORIUM

Sadly, the death of Pat SEARS at the end of November 2024 has been reported to us by her sister Cathy Aizlewood. Pat, along with her late husband Mike, joined BFHS in July 2000 and enjoyed the monthly meetings very much.



Pat (on the left) and Cathy are pictured together in September 2022 when she first got her diagnosis of Stage 4 ovarian cancer. She continued with a busy and active life, even moving home, until she was overtaken in October by unbeatable issues.

Her final message was to raise awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer, **[nhs.uk/conditions/ovarian-cancer](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ovarian-cancer)**.

RECENT TALKS

Were you unable to attend the talk given by Natasha Kikas to the Society on 6 September or Simon KEABLE-ELLIOT's on 6 December or use Zoom to join the live audience, or catch up by viewing their talks through the Members' Portal of our website? If you missed out, Natasha and Simon have kindly provided a summary of their talks below.¹ Simon has also written a book about his grandfather Utterly Immoral, Robert KEABLE and his scandalous novel and set up a website for more information for those interested: <https://robertkeable.com>.

USING BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHIVE FOR YOUR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

Natasha Kikas

This September I had the opportunity to give a talk at the BFHS monthly members meeting. I was asked to talk about what records archive offices hold and what may be most useful in family history research. As family historians, you will be familiar with the main sources available to you, such as parish registers, census returns and probate records. You will have likely accessed these online and they will have helped you establish the key dates for your family tree. This is why my talk focused on the little known or little used records which can be used to fill in some of the gaps in your tree. There are a lot of different records that are generated throughout people's lives, with many ending up at a local archive or record office, you just have to know which ones to look out for.

Where did they go?

If you are struggling to find family members in the parish registers, it may be that they feature in non-conformist records. Non-conformists were those who did not belong to an established church. In 1559 the Church of England was made the established church and therefore all non-Anglicans were non-conformists; this includes: Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Moravians, Quakers, Catholics and other denominations. Many will keep their own records; but registers and chapel books may have been deposited and can hold dates and key information that you may be missing.

The next key stage in people's lives is their form of education. In 1870 the Education Act made educating all children a legal requirement from the age of five. School admission registers and logbooks can be found from this date, although any charity run schools may have surviving records from an earlier date. Admission registers will give the child's date of birth, the name of one of their guardians, their address, date of admission and departure and the reason for them leaving school.

¹ Nick Barratt's talk to the Society on 4 October 2024 was summarised in the December 2024 issue of the *Journal*.

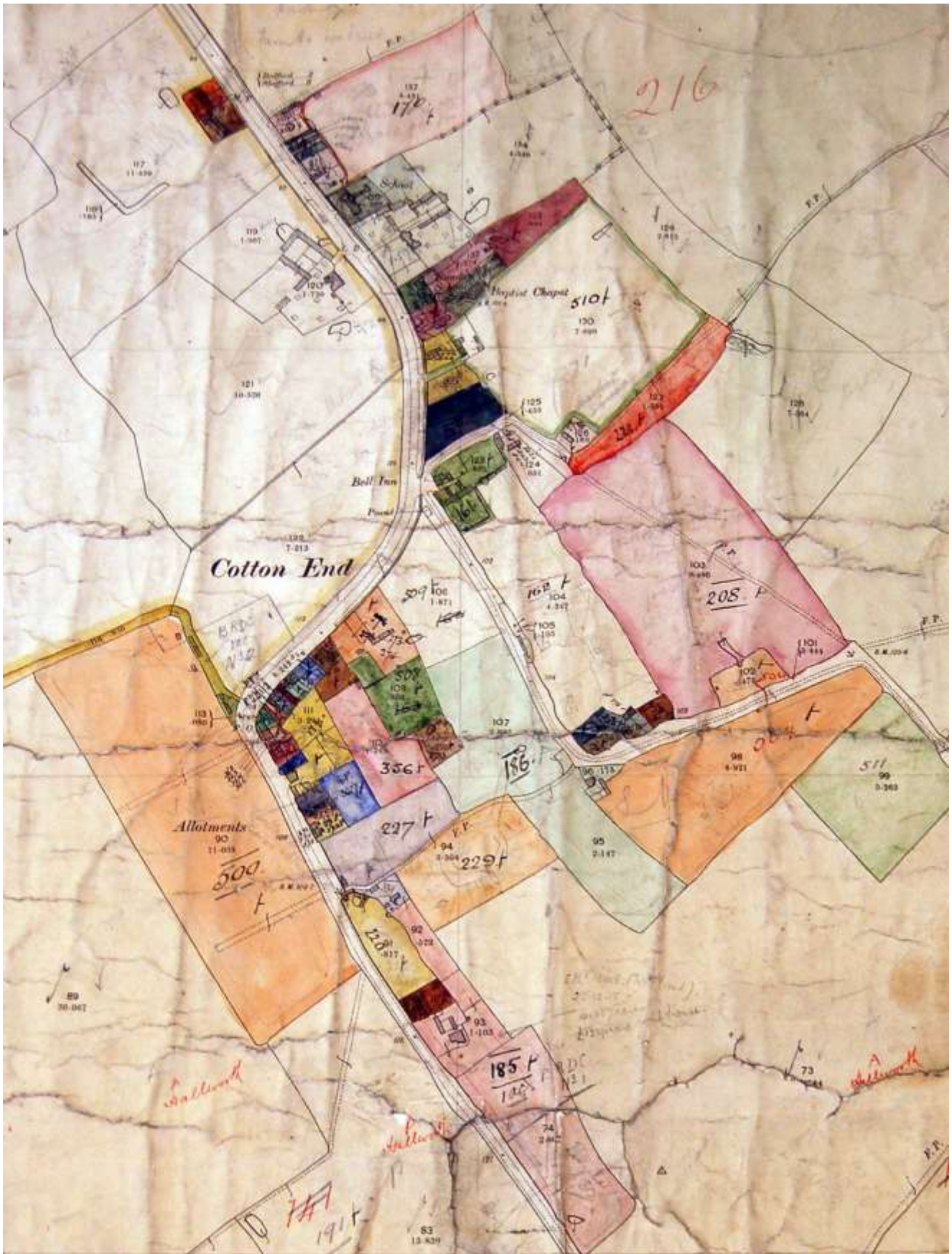
What did they do?

Once leaving school people would typically find a job or learn a trade to continue throughout their life. There are many resources you can use to find out what your ancestors did for a living. Census records will be your first indication as to what their occupation was, you can then follow this up with trade directories and business records of local companies. Directories were very extensive and listed the residents of larger urban areas as well as streets and their occupants; this included local businesses and traders.

If your ancestor worked for a local company, you may be able to see if there are any business records. Survival of these can be patchy, but certainly worth looking at. If you find a relative on the census giving their occupation, think laterally - were they self-employed or working for a company? Many big companies may have an archive collection, as well as smaller firms such as clockmakers, thatchers, millers and corn merchants. Records of cottage industries such as basket weaving, lace making, and straw plaiting may also survive and are worth searching through.

Did they own anything?

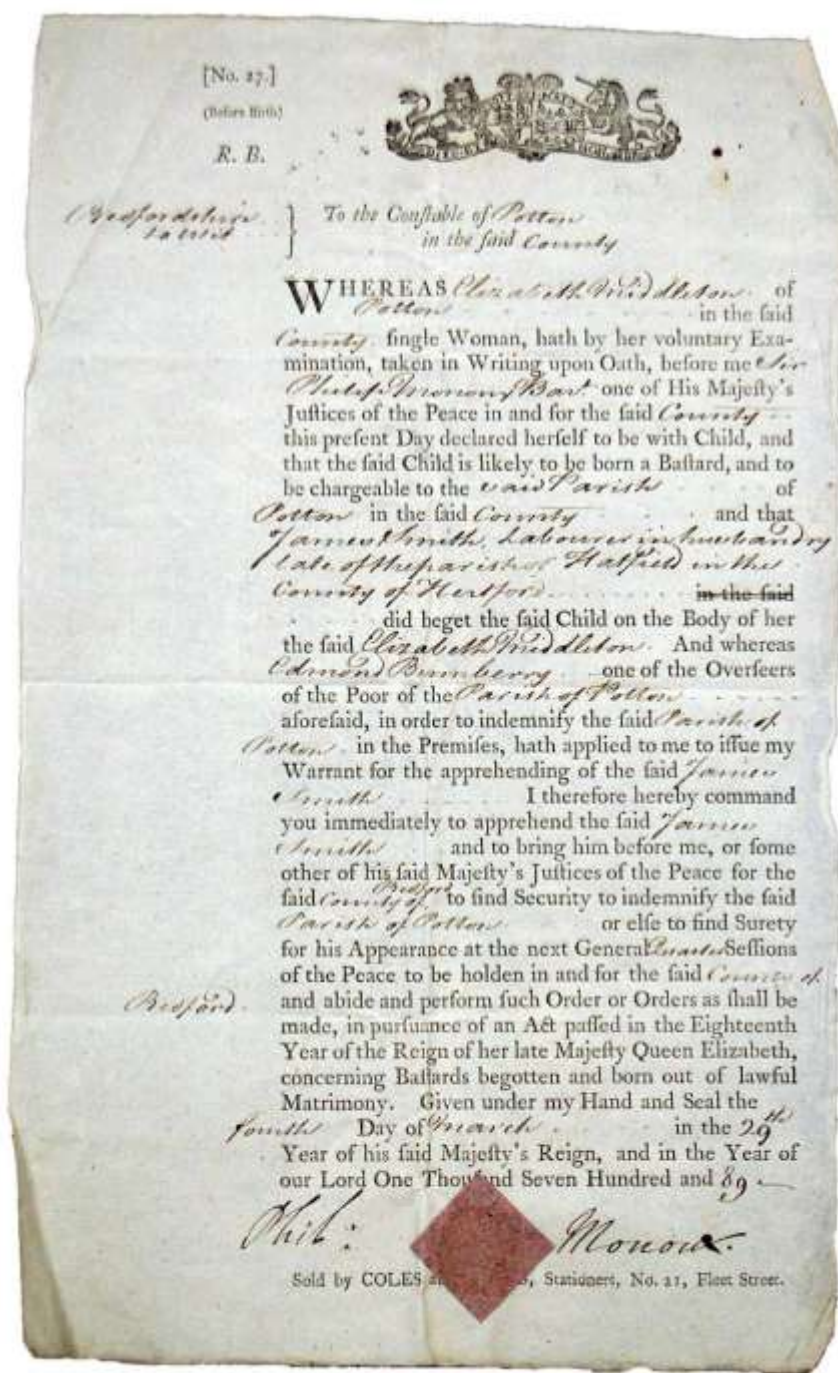
If you believe your ancestors owned land or property, then there is a wealth of material which you may find. This includes deeds, abstracts, sale catalogues and plans. If your ancestor owned property there may be a conveyance which will provide you with a description, a list of the parties involved and the amount paid - and if you are lucky, maybe a plan as well. Most record offices have a lot of deeds, these can come from various sources including landed estates, solicitors, businesses and individuals. Other records you can search would be sales catalogues and building plans, which can show you when a property was built, how it has developed over time and when it was sold. The 1910 and 1925 valuations also provide useful information as these were detailed surveys of land ownership for rating purposes. The sources for these are a map and a reference book giving the owner, occupier, brief description and area of all properties, see next page for an example.



1910 Valuation map showing Cotton End
 Courtesy of Bedfordshire Archives, Ref DBV3/171

Fallen on hard times?

People can fall on hard times at any stage in their lives and this may show up in our poor law records, gaol registers or asylum records. Poor law legislation instituted between 1597 and 1601 set in place the requirement for each parish to be responsible for the provision of monetary relief to its poor and needy. If your ancestors fell on hard times and needed the relief provided by poor law, then they may be found in the account books detailing what they received. Settlement papers and removal orders may also show if your ancestor was removed from one parish to another to receive relief. If you suspect illegitimacy, you may find information amongst bastardy papers and maintenance orders.



Bastardy Order, 1789

Courtesy of Bedfordshire Archives, Ref P64/15/2/5

If an ancestor had fallen on particularly hard times and ended up in prison, you would need to search the local gaol registers. Gaol registers list prisoners from all over the country and detail their crimes, their punishments and in some cases their physical descriptions. If you are lucky there may even be a photograph.

21

DATE OF COMMITMENT	REGISTER NUMBER	HOW DISPOSED OF
Sept. 10. 1860	5923	Disch ^d Oct 15. 1862

Name. *George Bennett alias Henry Simpson*

Age Height Hair Eyes Complexion Visage Weight Trade Where born Last residence Married or Single Religion Read and Write	Description. <i>23 years</i> <i>5'10"</i> <i>Dark brown</i> <i>Grey</i> <i>Sallow</i> <i>Long</i> <i>154 lbs</i> <i>Butcher</i> <i>Bedmont, Herts</i> <i>Bedmont</i> <i>Single</i> <i>Roman Catholic</i> <i>Impr.</i>		Marks and Remarks. <i>Mark on right side, has between blade bones an anchor, and hand, G.T. by B.P. marked on left arm. Lost little finger some time, has teeth in front, replaced and wears a bridge</i>
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Offence Found in the Parish Church of Luton on the night of the 5th Sept. 1860 with intent to commit robbery. Did assault and beat one Charles Kettle, a police constable, while apprehending him in the execution of his duty at Luton on the night of the 5th Sept. 1860

When Tried. *County Sessions, Oct 6 1860*
Sentence. *2 years*

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS, &c.

WHERE.	DATE.	OFFENCE.	SENTENCE.	WHERE.	DATE.	OFFENCE.	SENTENCE.
<i>St. Albans</i>	<i>1845 Feb 15</i>	<i>Wife's Damage</i>	<i>1 Month</i>	<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1850 Apr 27</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>2 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Apr 15</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>Discharged</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Oct 6</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1846 Apr 17</i>	<i>Stealing a Gun</i>	<i>Not guilty</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1850 Feb 14</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>May 25</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>Discharged</i>	<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1853 Aug 1</i>	<i>Light Poaching</i>	<i>9 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Oct 6</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1853 Aug 1</i>	<i>Common Brawl</i>	<i>1 Month</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>1848 Jan 24</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>2 Months</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Jan 3</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>2 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>May 9</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>Discharged</i>	<i>St. Albans</i>	<i>1853 Jan 3</i>	<i>Swearing &c</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Oct 20</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>2 Months</i>	<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1853 Nov 6</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>2 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Dec 23</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>2 Months</i>	<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1853 Jan 16</i>	<i>Light Poaching</i>	<i>3 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>1849 Feb 26</i>	<i>Stealing a Gun</i>	<i>Discharged</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>1853 Feb 7</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>2 Months</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>July 31</i>	<i>Housebreaking</i>	<i>12 Months</i>	<i>Wafford</i>	<i>1853 Aug 1</i>	<i>Light Poaching</i>	<i>4 years</i>
<i>St. Albans</i>	<i>Sept 18</i>	<i>Robbing a Person</i>	<i>12 Months</i>				
<i>Wafford</i>	<i>Nov 4</i>	<i>Poaching</i>	<i>22 Months</i>				
<i>"</i>	<i>Nov 26</i>	<i>same</i>	<i>3 Months</i>				

GENERAL REMARKS.

Gaol Register entry for George BENNETT, September 1860
 Courtesy of Bedfordshire Archives, Ref QGV10/4/021

Using the details from the gaol register you might find a record of their crime or trial in the Quarter Sessions papers or noted in the local newspaper.

Mental health has affected people throughout the centuries and if your ancestors were particularly affected, they may have ended up in an asylum. Case files may survive, alongside admission registers for those who spent time in these institutions. Due to the assumption of continuing confidentiality in mental health records there is usually a closure period of anywhere between 75 and 100 years, depending on the restrictions in place at your local archive office.

Where else can I look?

Newspapers are an exceptionally good source of information for births, marriages and deaths from the 19th century onwards. They can include reports on weddings and funerals as well as having obituaries. Inquests and criminal trials were also often recorded in detail and can be helpful when inquest or coroner's reports do not survive. Photographs are also a great source of information as some may include captions of who is in the photo, where and when it was taken and why. Family albums are great for this, although, it is possible that you have stumbled across lots of photographs with no information at all. Electoral registers can be particularly helpful if you want to know how long someone lived at a property. They list the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote. Ordnance survey maps may come in handy for trying to plot where they lived and how these places have changed over time.

There are many other types of records available, so it is always worth checking with your local archive office as to what collections they have. Their website may provide further information such as community history pages, research guides, articles and access to an online catalogue. Your local archive office is there to help and may be able to suggest records you never thought of, making them an excellent resource to fill in the gaps of your family tree.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Our Society will attend a variety of Family History Fairs around the country during the spring and this provides you with an opportunity to meet other members of the Society, discuss any brick walls your family research has encountered, and browse some of the publications we have to help your research.

We plan to exhibit at the following Fair:

Suffolk Family History Fair, 26 April 2025, 10 am to 4 pm at Suffolk Archives,
The Hold, 131 Fore Street, Ipswich IP4 1LR, suffolkfhs.co.uk.

Not BFHs specific, but the National Archives at Kew have a free exhibition on the hidden world of MI5 and the extraordinary stories behind the security of our nation, from 5 April to 28 September.

DISCOVERING ROBERT KEABLE, UTTERLY IMMORAL WW1 CHAPLAIN AND WRITER

Simon Keable-Elliott

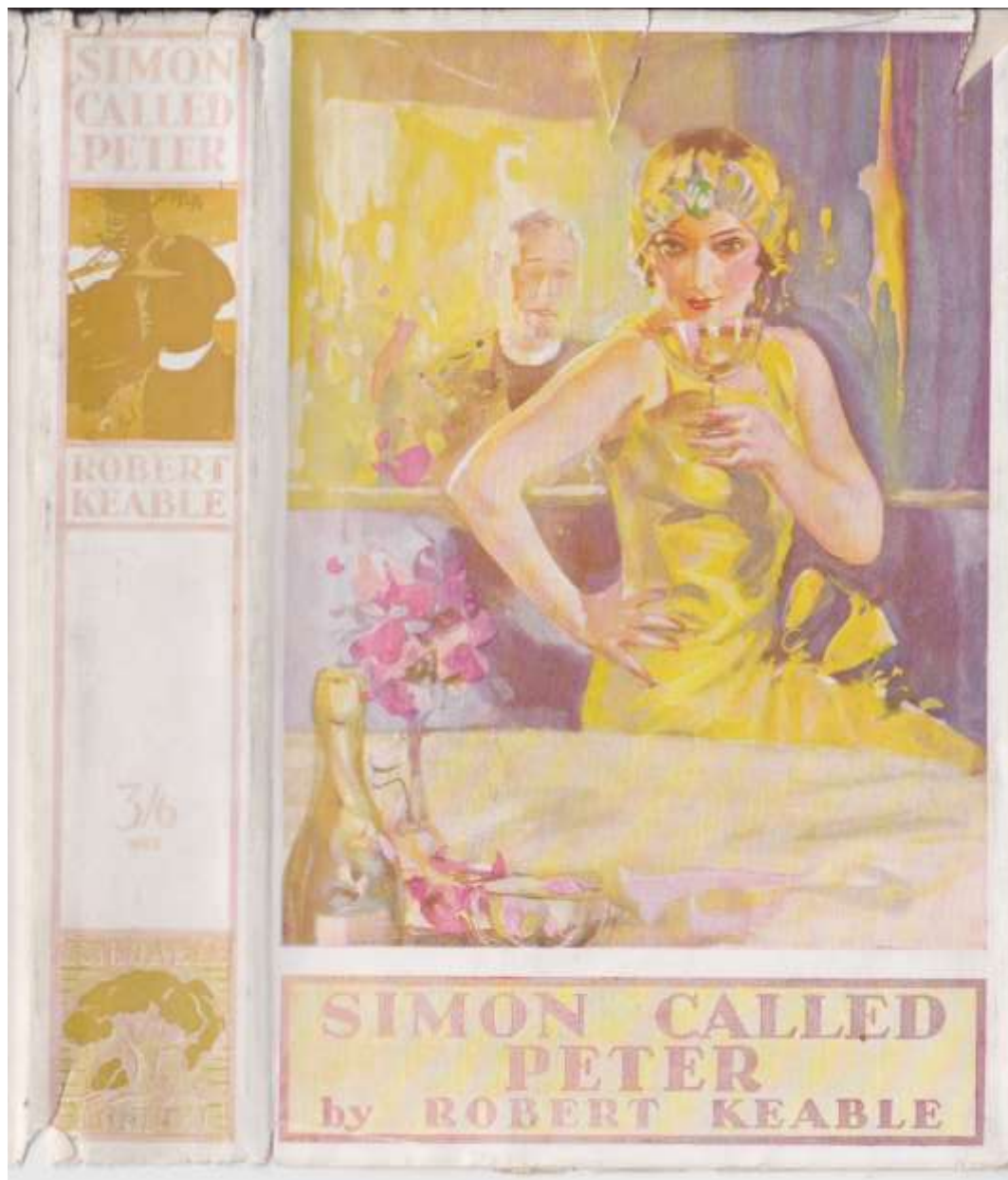


When I was young my father never wanted to talk about his parents. I was warned by my mother not to ask any questions. I knew my grandfather had been a writer, copies of his novels - and a few other religious books - were on the shelves of the bookcase in the hall. I knew he had been a priest and that he died in Tahiti and, of course, I surmised there must have been a big scandal but that was about it.

It must have been 35 years ago that I started to try and find out more. The historian Hugh Cecil had contacted my father as he was writing a book about 12 lesser-known WW1 writers (later published as *The Flower of Battle: How Britain wrote the Great War*) and wanted to include a chapter on Robert Keable, pictured above. I sat in while my father

told Hugh what he knew about his parents. I later discovered there were many inaccuracies in my father's account, partly because he took stories in the novels as being autobiographical.

Still, I felt inspired. My starting point was the novels and particularly Keable's first novel *Simon Called Peter*, cover pictured below. It was a huge best seller in the 1920s, name checked in *The Great Gatsby*, banned in Boston, USA, and turned into a play, which ran on Broadway. I later discovered that the play was banned in the UK when I read the Lord Chamberlain's file on the play in the British Library.



When one reads the novel one can see why it caused such a scandal. It is about a young priest, engaged to be married who becomes a military chaplain in France serving behind the lines in the rest camps of the British army during WW1. While there he witnesses the off-duty soldiers gambling, drinking heavily, womanising and sleeping with prostitutes. And eventually the chaplain has an affair with a young nurse and spends a weekend with her in a hotel in London while they are both on leave. The book ends with the priest returning to France to carry on with his duties. What shocked most people about the book

was that there is no moralising, no comeuppance for bad behaviour, all the action is described as if the events were totally normal.

What I discovered, but almost unbelievably was never commented on at the time, was that my grandfather had himself had an affair during the war when working as a chaplain. Unlike the fictional character, Robert Keable had been married when he went to France, and he served as a chaplain not to British soldiers but to the appallingly treated black men who served with the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC). And his affair was with my grandmother, Jolie BUCK pictured below, who was then working as a driver for the Canadian Forestry Corps.



It took me a long time to piece together Robert Keable's early life. I started with census records, school and university records and letters from family and friends. *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, the *Church Times Archives* and the diaries of Keable's acquaintances also proved helpful. He had been born in Battersea where his father, starting out as a tallow melter, had set up and run a successful candle making business. He moved to

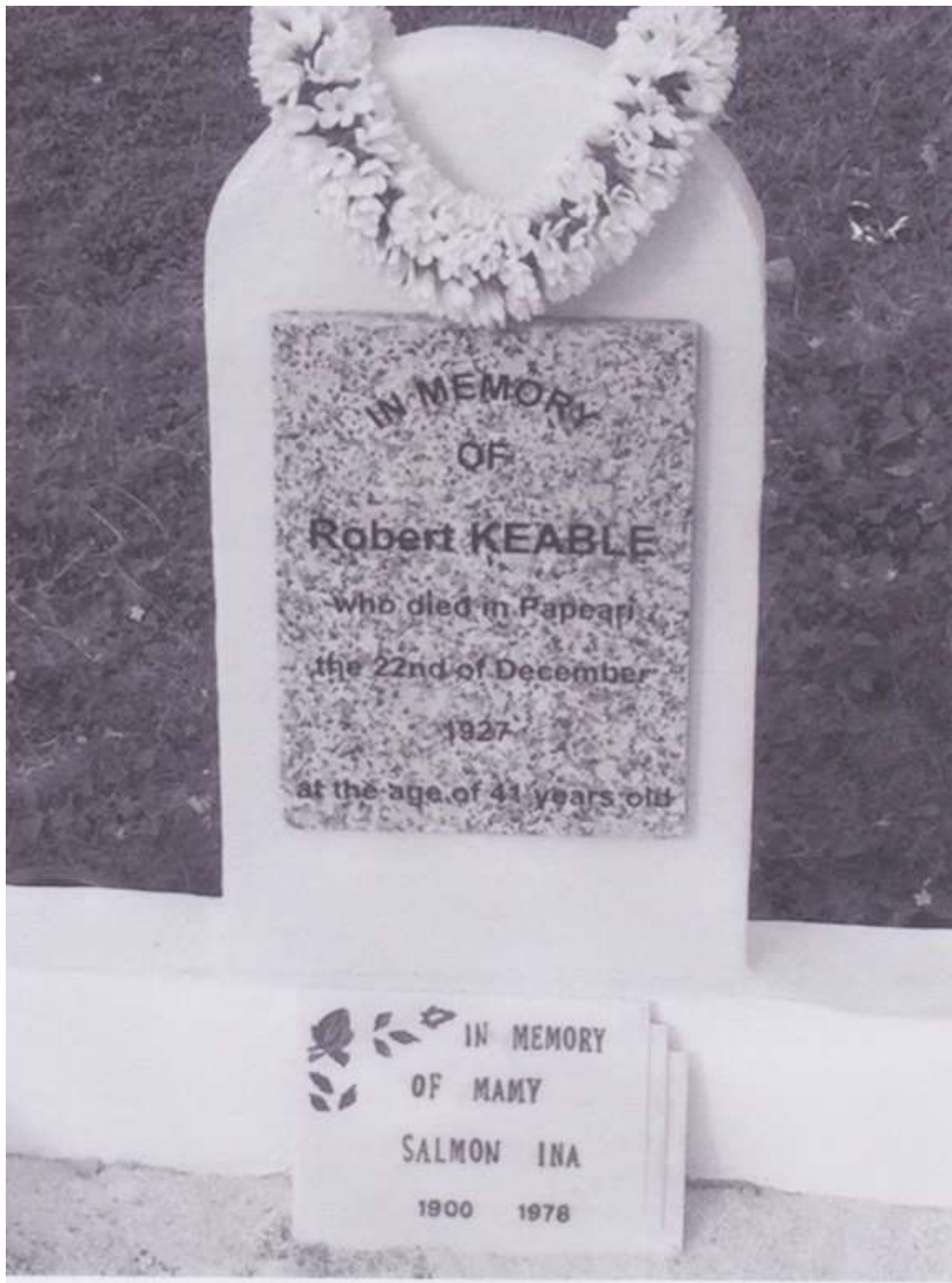
Croydon when his father gave up the business and became a priest. Keable had preached in the slums of Croydon as a schoolboy before winning a scholarship to Cambridge. After university he trained to become a priest, spent a year in Bradford and then got a posting to Zanzibar to work for the University Mission to Central Africa.

In Zanzibar Keable worked in a college teaching younger students and training older ones for the priesthood. He also set up the first scout groups ever on the island, insisting on mixing Christians, Hindus, and Moslems in each group. I learnt about Keable's time in Zanzibar through books and letters back in England and although I found no written records when I visited Zanzibar myself, I did manage to track down the ruins of the college he taught at and visit the graveyard where a few of his colleagues had been buried.

After his time in Zanzibar Keable was in England at the outbreak of the war and tried to join the army as a chaplain. Rejected because he was a High Church Anglican he accepted a job in Basutoland (Lesotho). Sybil, a friend from Bradford followed him out to Africa and they married in 1915. A year later he was shot by a stranger while visiting a military outpost on the Basutoland South Africa border. While researching the incident I came across a number of derogatory reports about my grandfather. Typical was a report in the book *The Saga of the Sani Pass* that he had been shot by the cuckolded husband of a local woman. The author went on to claim that after the war Keable had slept with the young girl playing the Virgin Mary in the parish nativity play, been defrocked, became a Catholic, slept with the choir mistress, and then left Africa going on to buy a South Pacific Island, where he surrounded himself with hula-hula girls and died of overindulgence aged 40. Sadly, very little of that proved to be true.

It seems likely that Keable's bad reputation in Lesotho came following his wartime experience where he sided with the labourers in the SANLC against the racist white officers. He of course did not help himself by having an affair with Jolie Buck. After the war he returned to Basutoland, spent a year back with his wife and his church before resigning as a priest and returning to England. Here he began his link with Bedfordshire. His father had become the parish priest in Pavenham and while waiting to earn money from his first novel Keable worked at Dunstable Grammar School for a year, where he appears to have been very popular with the students but not so much with fellow teachers.

Gathering information on Keable's later life, once *Simon Called Peter* had been published, became much easier as he became famous. Newspaper articles; letters to his publishers and famous friends held by American Universities; photographs and Keable's own writings proved very helpful. After a year in Dunstable, he left his wife and ran away with Jolie Buck to Tahiti where they lived together in the French Impressionist painter Paul Gauguin's house for a year. They built a house together on the island but tragically Jolie never saw it finished as she died in childbirth on a trip back to England. My father was born but Keable returned to Tahiti without him. After another year he began a relationship with a Tahitian princess. Princess Ina and he had a son, Henry in November 1927 but Keable died a month later aged just 40. I have visited the island to see his grave and stay in his house but sadly have never met any of my cousins.



GLEANINGS FROM THE RECORD OFFICE

Mary Wooldridge

These extracts are taken from the online catalogue produced by The Bedfordshire Archives, <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/Archives-Service.aspx>. I thought I would revive this column. A lot of our newer members may not know what a useful source it can be. A lot of the wording has been cut short but I think you will get what the documents are about. To start with I am using surnames of interest to me.

WEATHERHEAD is the paternal side of my family. The first two extracts are not as far as I can tell members of my own Ancestry. You can never say no when it comes to family history. My family went into Luton from Flamstead to work in the plait halls.

Reference:¹ Z1330/1/1

Title: Indenture between: (i) Richard WETHERED of Flamstead (Herts), weaver, and Elizabeth Wethered of Flamstead, widow; and (ii) John GOODMAN of Caddington (Herts), poulter.

Date free text: 1 July 1640

Scope and Content: Sale by Richard and Elizabeth Wethered to Goodman for £125 of an inn called the Bell at Studham with all associated property, now occupied by Edward RINGSALL.

Endorsed that Goodman had received the property. Witnesses: William ROWLANDS, Thomas CUSHIE, Richard CAVESTAFFE.

Annotated: "This Richard Wetherhead within named is the son and heir of Richard Wetherhead senior of ... who gave and bequeathed the premises".

One pendant seal; second seal missing.

Reference: HSA1683/S/7

Title: A Calender of the Prisoners in Bedford County Goal.

John JENKINS prisoner for Transportation. Thomas BROOKS & Elizabeth GLOVER Committed by Justice DANIEL upon Suspicion of the Murder of a Bastard Child.

Francis Wetherhead Committed by Sr John NAPIER Knt & Barronitt upon Suspicion of Robbing a house.

William WHITE remaynes prisoner for the fine, Laid upon him the Last Assizes.

¹ Texts in **BOLD** are the Catalogue fields. Texts are as provided by the Catalogue without any spelling or grammar correction.

Charles WATTS Committed upon Suspition of taking 20 hoods of a stall.

Christofer BENHILL Tho WRIGHT super Assiz xs Susanna KNIGHT ux Jo Knight CARPENTER for fel St Jo THOMSON.

Date free text: 1683

The extract below concerns my Gt Grandfather:

Reference: Z1572/1

Title: Ledger of William Weatherhead, straw plait and machinery manufacturers, Luton.

Date free text: 1888-1906

Production date: From: 1888 To: 1906

Admin/biog history: The company of William Weatherhead is listed in directories as follows:

1894 and 1898 Wm Weatherhead & Co, Straw Plait manufacturers, Bond Street.

1903 William Weatherhead, straw hat manufacturers' machinery manufacturer, 2 Dumfries St.

1910 & 1914 William Weatherhead & Son, Straw Hat Manufacturers' Machinery manufacturer 2 Dumfries St and Straw Plait manufacturer, Bond St.

1920 as 1914 plus machine tools at 4 Dumfries St.

1924 & 1931 Weatherhead & HARDING, machinery manufacturers, 4 Dumfries St.

1936 7 1940 Wm H Weatherhead, Straw hat manufactory 4 Dumfries St.

Loan status: UNFITunfit for production

This extract below does concern his son, my Grandfather William Henry Weatherhead

Reference: CPR/LE1/7

Title: Supplemental Abstract of the Title of the personal representatives of William Henry Weatherhead to freehold land at the corner of Ebenezer St. and Chapel St.

Abstracts from Conveyance dated 11 May 1942 from B.M. Williams and A.W. Burgess (mortgagee) to WHW of 4 Dumfries St., Luton, engineer, for £50 (paid to AWB), of the said land.

Recites back to Mortgage of 13 June 1906 to secure £700 and Conveyance of 17 June 1910; and includes acknowledgment to produce deeds back to the 1906 instrument. Includes plan (12 Mar 1947) of proposed new drains at 78 Chapel St. for Messrs. WARWICK (H.C. JANES Ltd., builders), grantees in fee of 78 Chapel St. in a drainage easement of 11 Apr 1947 reciting seisin of WHW to land and premises forming the site of 1-11 Ebenezer St. [ex CCA 707/7]

Date free text: 1958

Just to show that if you are lucky, you can find extracts of wills on this site.

When I research for someone, you do not just get dates. I will flesh out your ancestry, using the parish registers as an initial source but then delving further into other records that years of research knowledge has helped me discover. So one more extract and this is part of a will written by a Mary KING nee WILLISON of Toddington the wife of a farmer called Andrew King and the mother of my 5 x Gt Grandma Sarah Willison who married Joseph Weatherhead of Toddington

Reference:BO1077

Title: Probate of will of Mary King, wife of Andrew King of Toddington, farmer, (made with the consent of her husband) to son William Willison, mess. in Toddington now in occ.

Geo. BUTT and Sarah CARTER, paying £1 p.a. to testator's dau. Sarah Weatherhead

to dau. Mary HORLEY w. of Edw. Horley, Toddington, £40

to son James Willison £110

to son George Willison £200 and household goods

to husb. Andrew King and husband's son Andrew King £5 each

to dau. Sarah Weatherhead £5

to my nephews William John and Thomas Willison, and to my niece Ann Willison children of my son Thomas Willison deceased the sum of £10 each

to sons Francis and Joseph Willison, household goods and farming stock

executors: sons Francis and Joseph made 10 May 1783 pro. Arch. Beds. 15 Sep 1783

Date free text: 1783



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P.G. Dip. in Archive Management

Vicki has worked for Bedfordshire Archives, The Panacea Museum, and several other heritage organisations in Bedfordshire thus giving her a unique and specialist knowledge of genealogy, family and house history records relating to Bedfordshire.

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BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TEA TOWELS

The Society has had a supply of Bedfordshire Heritage tea towels printed and these are now being 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.

They are 100% cotton and at £4.50 each can be obtained from the bookstall at members' meetings, by email to [**secretary@bfhs.org.uk**](mailto: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 £2.00

3 to 6 tea towels add £3.00

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

WHY NOT WRITE SOMETHING FOR THE JOURNAL?

We are always on the lookout for contributions to the *Journal*, any size, short or long. To give you some idea, a *Journal* page takes around 450 words to fill. We would also welcome items shorter than a page. You might feel more comfortable writing a letter or email on a topic, and this would be included in a '**Letters**' page in the *Journal*.

There are very few requirements for a contribution. It must have a family history theme although this could be the story of a building that has a significance to a family history, for example a church where several members of a family were baptised, married, or buried. There needs to be a link to Bedfordshire, although if the research technique is interesting then it can be included as an example of 'what to do.' The best articles include copies of original records such as census returns and family photographs.

Concentrate on telling the story of the characters in the family history and highlight any successes, or failures in the research. Identify any unresolved issues that need further work. Something as short as 300 to 400 words is acceptable, and much longer articles are always welcome because they can be published over several issues. No need to worry if you are not used to writing. Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar, or physical layout. The editorial 'team' will help you produce a polished article.

Seeing your own work in print can feel like a real achievement and others will appreciate your effort. Simply writing down your 'brick wall' can help you see the problem more clearly and, you never know, someone reading it may be able to help you move forward. A great way to start is to take a small part of your family tree and describe the main characters, where and when they lived and died, and any stumbling blocks you encountered in researching their history, such as name changes or document transcription errors. If you need ideas to get you going or would like to discuss your ideas, please send an email to journal@bfhs.org.uk.

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We notify our members via email about any zoom/hybrid meetings; however, some get bounced back and for some members we do not have an email address. If you have not been receiving these emails from us it means that we do not have your email address, or the email address we have is incorrect or your mailbox is full.

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REMINDER

The CLOSING DATE for articles to be published in the
June 2025 *Journal* is **30 April 2025**.

(Articles submitted near the closing date may not
be published until the following *Journal*)



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BEDFORDSHIRE PARISH REGISTERS

Many new computers do not have CD drives, so we are pleased to announce that all our CDs are now available for sale as downloads from Parish Chest and Genfair.

The available downloads include all 128 Bedfordshire Parish Registers, Bedfordshire Nonconformist Registers, Marriage Licences, Poor Law papers, BFHS back Journals Vol 1-19 with an index to surnames and subjects, and the four Bedfordshire Will books. BFHS Journals volumes 20-24 are available free in the Members' Portal of the BFHS website.

To access the stores directly please visit **parishchest.com** or **genfair.co.uk**, although the simplest way of accessing a BFHS download is to visit our website **bfhs.org.uk** then select 'Online Stores.' If you then select Parish Chest the majority of the downloads are to be found in the 'Downloads' folder, but Poor Law, Journals and Wills book are listed under the appropriate folder located down the left-hand side of the screen. If you select Genfair, the downloads are listed alongside the CDs in the relevant section. Both stores have a search feature, and the content of each product is given. Downloads are the same price as the CDs.

BFHS has produced a resource to help in finding your missing relations. If they were baptised or buried before 1852 or married before 1837 (and in some cases later) in Bedfordshire and appear in the Parish Registers, then they will appear on our Surnames CD, available as a free download on the home page of **bfhs.org.uk**. Alternatively, the CD is available for only £10 including UK P&P, from Sales, Bedfordshire Family History Society, PO Box 214, Bedford MK41 8WB, enquiries to **bookstall@bfhs.org.uk**.

CDs for all 128 ancient Bedfordshire parishes listed below are available from:

Sales, Bedfordshire Family History Society, PO Box 214, Bedford MK41 8WB, or
bookstall@bfhs.org.uk

Each CD or download contains, for one parish:

All Parish Register transcripts up to 1812 and searchable Indexes to the Parish Registers for:

Baptisms at least 1813-1851 (some parishes all up to 1851)

Marriages up to 1885; and all Burials to 1851

The relevant 1851 Census Index for Bedfordshire

CDs marked † also contain Monumental Inscriptions (MIs) from a graveyard in the parish

(church, chapel, or cemetery). Those marked * contain records from the registers or graveyards of Nonconformist chapels in the parish, photographs, and other records are included as available.

‡ Holwell: MIs and Burials only, not Registers (now in Herts).

Prices include UK or overseas post and packing. The cost of a full set of Parish CDs is £1,250.

Any recently revised CDs are indicated by the issue number in bold. **Please note that CDs will no longer be updated** whereas downloads will be updated when more indexes and any new MI listings become available.

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box. For members who are not able to use the suggestion box we invite you to email us at bfhs@bfhs.org.uk.

Your committee appreciates any help, ideas, or suggestions that you may have regarding any aspect of the BFHS organisation.

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