



**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 25 No 5 Mar 2026



His Grace the 11th Duke of Bedford, Herbrand Russell (1858–1940)

BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
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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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AN APOLOGY

Our December 2025 issue of the *Journal* included an article about the Women's Land Army during WW1 by Helen Frost. The photograph of four women on page 23 of the *Journal* should have included the acknowledgement *by kind permission of Mrs Hilary Thomas*.



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).¹

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.

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

TALK PROGRAMME (cont'd)

Crime & Punishment in the 19th Century

David Annal

Friday 6 Mar



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.

TBC

Friday 3 April

Miracles, Wonders and a Broken Heart

David Longman

Friday 1 May



Continuing from *The Admiral*, *The Rector* and *Long John Silver*, the second talk includes the Keysoe Miracle involving William DICKENS' fall from Keysoe church steeple, EILWARD of Westoning and his miraculous recovery from castration and Alice ANDERSON's touching memorial on which she records how her heart is forever entombed with her dead husband – four years before she re-married!

AGM

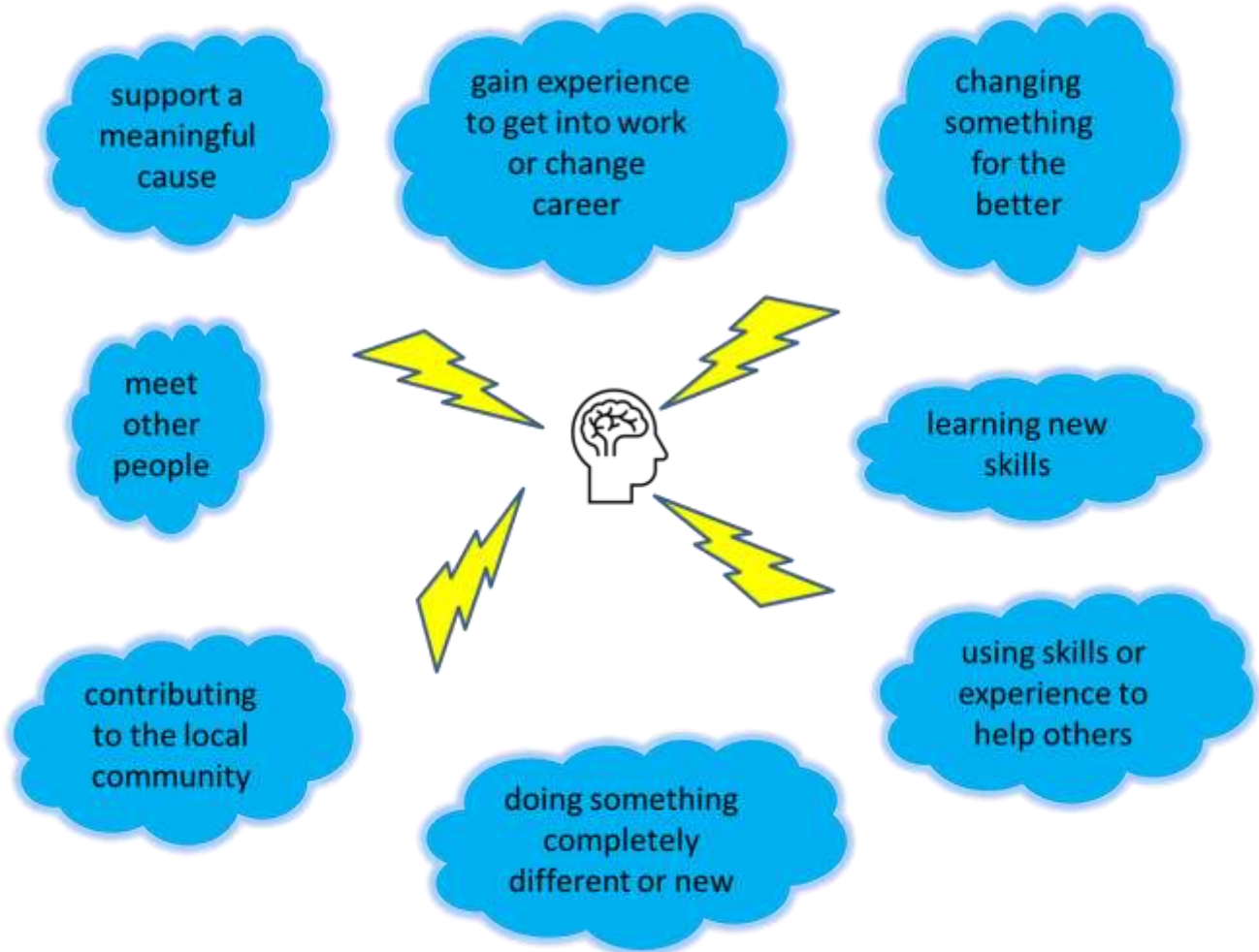
followed by

talk by Pamela Birch, County Archivist

Friday 5 June

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.

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.

BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DEATH CERTIFICATES

We are looking to build up our collection of resources at the Research Centre that are available to help researchers of Bedfordshire ancestors. We would like to build up our collection of Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates of Bedfordshire people. Do you have any copies of certificates that you would be willing to donate to this collection?

Please send copies to Bedfordshire Family History Society, Research Centre, Office 1-7, Community Voluntary Service, 43 Bromham Road, Bedford. MK40 2AA or alternatively send scanned copies to **Research.Centre@bfhs.org.uk**.

We would also like to build our collection of printed pedigree charts for Bedfordshire families. If you have a pedigree chart that you would like to share, please send a copy to the above address.

SURNAME INTEREST DATABASE

The Family History Federation (FHF) has a Surname Interest database on their website, **familyhistoryfederation.com/surname-interests**. This has 27 societies contributing data (up from 24 last year). There are nearly 70,000 surnames listed in the database.

Register your Surname Interests with us and these will be included in the FHF database, see 'Member's Profile Form' in the Members' Portal.

BEDFORDSHIRE

Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire

Family and Local History Research (including Probate Transcriptions)
undertaken by

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*Member of the
Association of Genealogists & Researchers in Archives*

Professional Service Offered. All Enquiries Welcome

MEET OUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Pauline REDPATH has been co-opted as a Committee Member and will be assisting Paul Woodcraft with the Funeral Directors' Records Project and we thank her for volunteering. Pauline describes her interest in family history below.



My journey into family history began in the late 1970s, sparked by a simple but meaningful discovery - an obituary card for my great-grandfather, Ephraim MONEY. That small piece of family memorabilia ignited a lifelong interest in genealogy, and from that moment I began researching my ancestors.

Much of my early work focused on my father's paternal line, the Money family. Through parish registers, census records, and other historical sources, I traced this line from Hampshire back into Berkshire, eventually reaching the late sixteenth century. Along the way, I not only uncovered names and dates but gained insight into the everyday lives of my ancestors.

Other surnames of particular interest in my research include WALTON of Warwickshire, CLARK(E) of Gloucestershire, and WEBB

of Cambridgeshire, along with many others who have contributed to the wider family story.

Occupational history has added a fascinating dimension to my research. Members of the Money family were predominantly agricultural labourers and wheelwrights, reflecting the rural communities in which they lived. The Webb family were millers at Great Gransden Mill, a site I have been fortunate to visit while parts of the original structure remained intact. During one visit, I discovered the carved initials of two of my ancestors on a main beam - a moving and tangible connection to the past.

Local folklore also surrounds the mill, including a tale from the 1860s in which an 'infidel's Bible' was allegedly hidden within it. It is said the mill sails would not turn for three years until the book was discovered and destroyed, after which normal operation resumed.

Family history has become far more than a hobby for me; it is a way of preserving stories, understanding lives lived before us, and maintaining a strong connection with the past.

Now I have retired I hope to continue my family history journey.

IMPORTANT MEMBERS' PORTAL CHANGES

Brian Payne

The Members' Portal of our website provides access to a variety of BFHS Member-only resources such as Talk Videos, back issues of our Journal (back to Volume 1, Issue1), Journals from a multitude of Family History Societies across the world, Funeral Directors' Records and much more. To ease our administrative burden of running the portal we have recently introduced a few changes.

From its inception, the system has always been set up to pick a password for you. This was a manual process for me that required linking the member number and password, then emailing it to the member. The passwords were always very random and possibly difficult to remember. Over the past few years, we have been testing new ways to log on. We now have a system that allows members to choose their own password and reset it automatically, without human intervention.

Below are the instructions for setting up your new login. **Every member will need to go through this process** to create a **new account** with a **new password** with the new system. Once approved by our Membership Secretary, you should have access as you did before. If you need to, there is a logout button on the menu on the right-hand side.

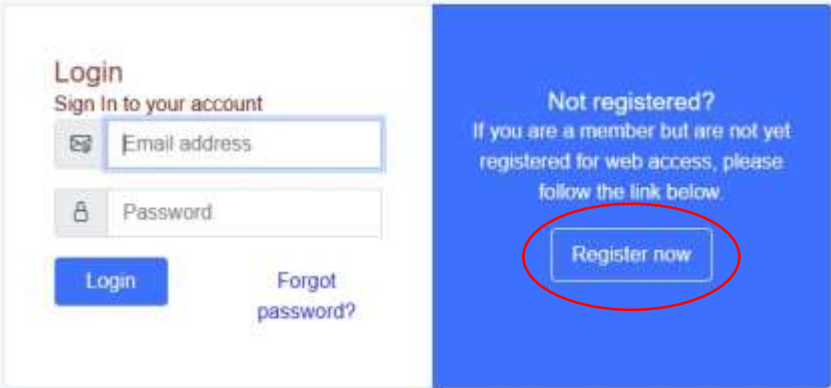
I would like to thank Ryan O'Neill for his hard work in setting this up. As you know, we are all volunteers, including Ryan, who spent considerable time creating the new system.

Set-up Instructions

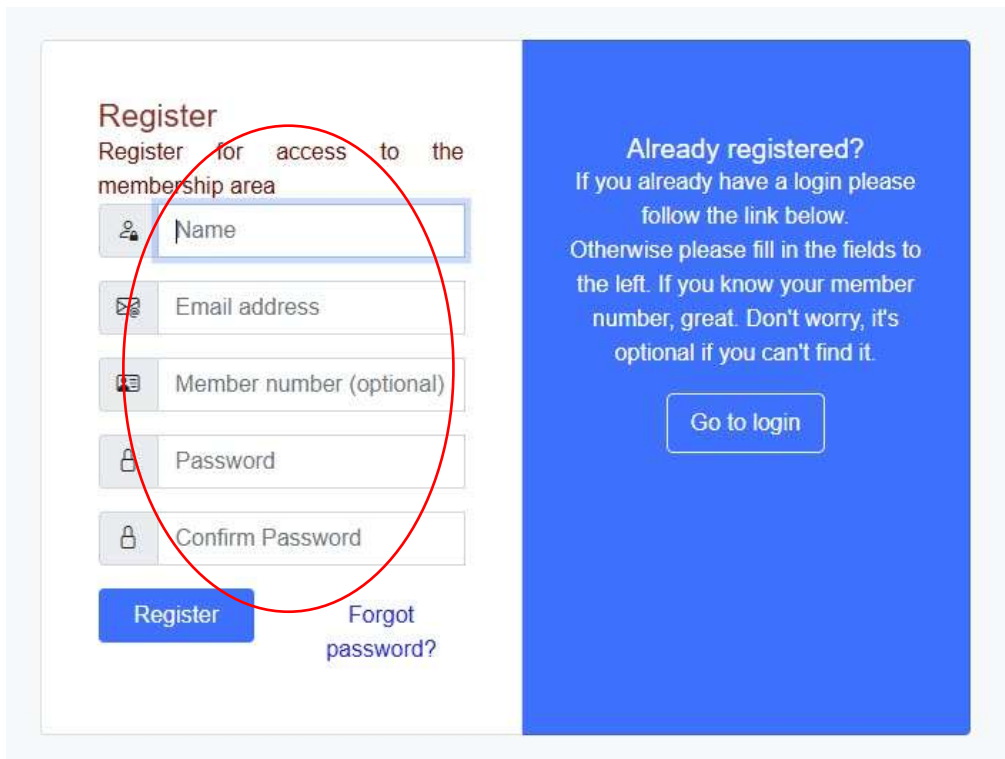
Click on Members Portal on the menu at the top of the screen of the BFHS website, **bfhs.org.uk**.

Please follow the steps below to set up your new logon

Click on "Register now"



The screenshot shows the BFHS Members' Portal interface. On the left, there is a 'Login' section with the text 'Sign In to your account'. It contains two input fields: 'Email address' and 'Password', each with an icon (an envelope for email and a lock for password). Below these fields is a blue 'Login' button. To the right of the 'Login' button is a link that says 'Forgot password?'. On the right side of the interface, there is a blue box with the text 'Not registered?' and 'If you are a member but are not yet registered for web access, please follow the link below.' Below this text is a button labeled 'Register now', which is circled in red.

The image shows a registration form on the left and a blue sidebar on the right. The form is titled 'Register' and includes the text 'Register for access to the membership area'. It contains five input fields: 'Name', 'Email address', 'Member number (optional)', 'Password', and 'Confirm Password'. Each field has a small icon to its left. Below the fields is a blue 'Register' button and a link 'Forgot password?'. A red circle highlights the 'Name' field. The blue sidebar on the right contains the text 'Already registered?' followed by instructions for existing users and a 'Go to login' button.

Register
Register for access to the membership area

Name

Email address

Member number (optional)

Password

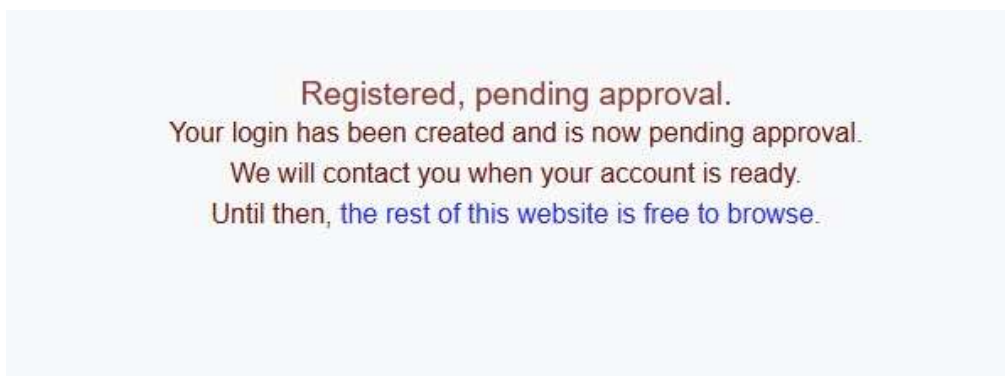
Confirm Password

Register [Forgot password?](#)

Already registered?
If you already have a login please follow the link below.
Otherwise please fill in the fields to the left. If you know your member number, great. Don't worry, it's optional if you can't find it.

[Go to login](#)

Fill in your information on the left, create a password and click on Register.
A confirmation page will appear.

The image shows a confirmation message on a light blue background. The text reads: 'Registered, pending approval. Your login has been created and is now pending approval. We will contact you when your account is ready. Until then, the rest of this website is free to browse.' The last sentence is a link.

Registered, pending approval.
Your login has been created and is now pending approval.
We will contact you when your account is ready.
Until then, [the rest of this website is free to browse.](#)

The Membership Secretary will verify the information and grant you access. You will receive an email once you have been approved.

Click on the link '**the rest of this website is free to browse**' to return to the home page.

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.²

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.



² 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.



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.

A NOBLE EXPERIMENT

THE DUKE OF BEDFORD'S VISION FOR THORNEY VILLAGE

Helen Parker-Drabble

Thorney, a small agricultural village nestled in the Fenlands of Cambridgeshire, holds a unique place in the history of the Bedford family. Under the stewardship of successive Dukes of Bedford, it was transformed from a once dreary marshland into a thriving agricultural model village. The story of Thorney is not just one of bricks and mortar but of social reform, paternalism, and forward-thinking agricultural innovation. This article explores the role of the 7th and 11th Dukes of Bedford in shaping Thorney and reflects on the village's significance to the Bedford family legacy.

Before the intervention of the Bedford family, Thorney was a low-lying, marshy landscape, prone to flooding and plagued by malarial conditions. It was the 4th Earl of Bedford, Francis Russell (later the 1st Duke), who began the transformation of the Fens in the 17th century. He financed the draining of the fenlands, creating the Bedford Level. This monumental engineering feat not only reclaimed fertile farmland but also laid the groundwork for Thorney's development.

However, the most significant changes to the village came much later, under the stewardship of the 7th Duke of Bedford, Francis Russell (1788–1861), and the 11th Duke, Herbrand Russell (1858–1940).

Francis Russell was a progressive landowner who sought to improve the lives of his tenants. He inherited the Thorney estate during a time of widespread agricultural hardship and rural poverty. Recognising that better living conditions could enhance productivity and well-being, he embarked on an ambitious project to rebuild Thorney as a model agricultural village.

Between 1849 and 1861, the 7th Duke oversaw the construction of over 300 cottages, designed to provide tenant farmers and estate workers with better housing. These cottages were notable for their thoughtful design, with many featuring three bedrooms, a living space, and a garden large enough to grow vegetables. As the 11th Duke believed that 'no cottager who is without a pig can be said to be making the best of his opportunities', he added a pigsty to the design.¹ Wisbech Road, Thorney is pictured below.² The tree appears outside what is now number 74.

¹ Bedford, H. A. R., 11th Duke of (1897). *A Great Agricultural Estate, Being the Story of the Origin and Administration of Woburn and Thorney*. London: Murray, pp. 87, 91.

² Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Peterborough Images Archive: peterboroughimages.co.uk



These cottages, many of which are Grade II listed, were built with high-quality materials, including bricks and slate, which gave them durability and a distinctive aesthetic. In their book about the village, the Friends of Thorney Society note that a ‘range of cottages was built to reflect the working status of the tenant’. They were intermingled to promote ‘good levels of social behaviour’.³ The *Victoria County History* accepted that ‘there is probably no village in England with a more extensive display of well-designed Victorian cottage architecture’.⁴ Cleanliness and hygiene were priorities for the 7th Duke, who provided each property with an outdoor flushing toilet, a progressive feature for the era.

Public buildings were dotted around the village, including the school, the Abbey (used as the parish church), and the Tank Yard, which housed the village's waterworks and fire station. At the heart of it all, the village green, near the Abbey, became a central gathering place for events and celebrations.

Herbrand Russell the 11th Duke of Bedford (1858–1940), pictured on the front cover⁵, inherited Thorney in 1893. He continued his predecessor's legacy, but his approach was marked by a keen interest in scientific innovation and sustainable practices.

³ Friends of Thorney (2014). *Thorney in Focus – An Historic Village in the Fens. Great Britain*. Thorney Society, p. 162.

⁴ Falco, S. (2016) *The Gradual Simplification of a Scheme: The Phase-by-Phase Documentary and Fabric Analysis of the Duke of Bedford's Model Cottage Provision at Thorney 1849–65*. Unpublished Thesis. University of Cambridge.

⁵ From the Woburn Abbey Collection, with permission from His Grace the 15th Duke of Bedford, Andrew Russell.

He was deeply invested in modernising agriculture and improving the lives of his estate workers through education, technology, and social reform.

One of the most remarkable features of Thorney under the 11th Duke's stewardship was the Tank Yard. This state-of-the-art water and sewage system was powered by steam and represented a significant step forward in public health for the village. Rainwater was collected from the roofs of buildings in the Tank Yard and filtered through a series of reservoirs before being pumped to the cottages. The sewage system, designed to recycle human waste into fertiliser for the estate fields, demonstrated the Duke's commitment to sustainability.

My great-grandfather, Stephen PARKER, managed the water and sewage system, and acted as an intermediary between the estate and the tenants when carrying out his duties as the inspector of the cottages. He reported directly to the 11th Duke's steward, who was resident in the village.

The Tank Yard also housed a fire station, complete with a horse-drawn fire engine. The 11th Duke ensured the village was equipped with the infrastructure to protect its residents and their property. The Tank Yard, c1896, is pictured below.⁶



⁶ From the Culpin collection of Thorney postcards and photographs, with permission.

The 11th Duke placed a strong emphasis on education and self-improvement, seeing them as essential to the advancement of his tenants. He supported the village school, pictured below,⁷ subsidised the salaries of teachers and ensured it was well-equipped, and regularly replaced the lead pencils 'in place of those destroyed by order of the medical officer' following the outbreak of infectious diseases.⁸ The school taught practical skills alongside traditional subjects, preparing children for work in agriculture or trades.



The Duke also supported adult education initiatives, such as the Thorney Mutual Improvement Society. This organisation provided lectures, debates, and a library, fostering a culture of lifelong learning. The Duke's commitment to education reflected his belief that knowledge and self-reliance were the keys to a prosperous and harmonious community.

Both the 7th and 11th Dukes of Bedford were paternalistic landlords who saw it as their duty to care for their tenants. This sense of responsibility was clear in the many initiatives they undertook to improve living standards in Thorney.

The 11th Duke also supported community events, such as the annual Thorney Flower Show and the Foresters Fete, which brought villagers together and fostered a sense

⁷ The infants' and girls' school, Church Street, Thorney. From Helen Parker-Drabble's Collection.

⁸ *Thorney Infant School Logbook*, 6 December 1912, p. 181.

of pride and belonging. These events were opportunities to celebrate the achievements of the community, from horticulture to craftsmanship, and attracted large numbers of visitors brought to the village by the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway, who agreed to provide discounted rail tickets.

Despite their many achievements, the Dukes' paternalistic approach was not without its challenges. The rigid hierarchy of the village, where the estate steward wielded significant power over tenants, sometimes led to tensions. For example, the story of young Walter Parker, son of the estate's foreman, who refused to doff his cap to the estate steward, highlights the friction that could arise between tenants and the estate's representatives.

The Dukes' focus on maintaining social order and moral behaviour occasionally clashed with how 'Thorneyites' wished to live their lives. For instance, the village's strict temperance policies, supported by the People's Refreshment House Association, were not always popular among residents. The Rose & Crown Inn, pictured below,⁹ managed under this scheme, aimed to promote temperance by reducing the sale of alcohol and encouraging the consumption of tea and coffee. While well-intentioned, such measures were sometimes viewed as overbearing.



The contributions of the Dukes of Bedford to Thorney have left an indelible mark on the village. Their vision of a model agricultural community, rooted in social responsibility and innovation, remains a testament to the power of enlightened landownership.

⁹ Rose & Crown, Thorney, 1908. With grateful thanks to the Peterborough Images Archive. www.peterboroughimages.co.uk.

Many of the buildings constructed under the 7th and 11th Dukes still stand, offering a glimpse into the village's rich history. The Tank Yard, the cottages, and the Bedford Hall are enduring symbols of the Dukes' commitment to improving the lives of their tenants.

Thorney's story also serves as a reminder of the complexities of rural life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. While the Dukes' efforts brought significant improvements, they also highlighted the challenges of balancing progress with tradition and autonomy.

For the Bedford family, Thorney represents more than just a chapter in their history; it is a living legacy of their vision, values, and dedication to the welfare of their tenants. It stands as a model not only of agricultural innovation but also of the enduring importance of community and social responsibility in rural life.

This article has been informed by *A Victorian's Inheritance* by Helen Parker-Drabble, helenparkerdrabble.com, archival materials from the Thorney Museum, the author's research and *The Story of a Great Agricultural Estate* by Herbrand Arthur Russell, the 11th Duke of Bedford.

EARLY EDUCATION IN LUTON A FAMILY'S CONTRIBUTION

Barry Neale

Education in England and Wales in the Victorian era was, to say the least, pretty basic. In 1870, out of around four and a half million children of primary school age, a million attended voluntary (ie church) schools and a further million and a half were in state-aided schools, but two million had no access to schools at all. The 1870 Elementary Education Act had required partially state-funded Board Schools, managed by locally elected school boards, to be set up to provide elementary - ie primary - education in areas where existing provision was inadequate; schools were fee-paying, but poor parents could be exempted.

Further legislation in 1880 made education compulsory for five to ten-year-olds, following a campaign for universal basic schooling by the National Education League. The law also stipulated that children aged between 8 and 13 could be employed outside school provided they attended for at least 10 hours a week (they were called 'half-timers') - an important concession given that families often relied on their children adding to the family income by working in the factories and fields. Into this unsatisfactory environment came Fred SHOOSMITH, who had decided that teaching was going to be his profession. He had been trained as a pupil-teacher in the prestigious Waller Street School in Luton, a breeding ground for quality teachers and the pride of the local School Board.

Frederick Howard Shoosmith was born on 14 April 1865 in Hastings Street in Luton, the son of Frederick Shoosmith and his wife Elizabeth, nee HOWARD. The couple had moved in the 1850s from Chelsea, where four of their children had been born – including Amelia, my great-grandmother – to Luton, and Frederick had established himself as

(appropriately!) a boot and shoemaker. Four more children were born in Luton, which was developing from a small market town into a bustling local hub.

Fred Shoosmith was appointed headmaster in January 1887 of the Board School in Stopsley, then a small village a couple of miles from Luton and which was only incorporated into the town in 1933, replacing William Johnston. He was awarded a salary of £70 per year, plus half the school grant (based on the number of pupils enrolled), plus free use of the schoolhouse, fuel and light. He brought with him as his assistant his sister Agnes, a former pupil-teacher. Conditions at the school were far from satisfactory: in 1886, 55 children were recorded as being taught in one classroom measuring 10 feet by 18 feet, and a Board member had described it as ‘a Black Hole of Calcutta’, and an inspector had recorded that while the education was ‘satisfactory’, the premises were not, with paper hanging off the walls, a disgusting smell, and rats, mice and bugs.

James DYER, the Stopsley-born local historian, teacher and archaeologist, has written of the history of Stopsley and its schools. He described Fred Shoosmith as a ‘fine headmaster’; he noted that, although the school at Stopsley was very run down, both physically and academically, when Fred took over in 1887, with very poor attendance and discipline and appalling ignorance on the part of pupils, during his six years the standard of learning and discipline improved considerably. Dyer concluded that Fred Shoosmith had, against the odds, created a thriving school, and to him should go the credit of finally bringing education to Stopsley.

In July 1893, Fred was granted 12 days special leave in order to sit for a degree exam in London, and in November of that year he was promoted to be headmaster of the newly created Surrey Street School in Luton. As a farewell present, he was given an oak book-slide by the staff and pupils of Stopsley.

While still working at Stopsley, Fred had married Emily CAIN in 1892; she had been born in Glasgow but had moved as a child with her father to Luton. The 1901 census shows the family living in Stuart Street in Luton, where Fred is shown as a headmaster of a Board School. A decade later, in 1911, the family had left the town to live in Carshalton in Surrey, where Fred Shoosmith is described as an educational editor and author. He died in Carshalton in 1955, aged 89.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

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.

If you have an email address but are not getting our emails but would like to do so, please send your current email address to **treasurer@bfhs.org.uk**.

RECENT TALKS

Were you unable to attend the talks given by Steve Dimmer to the Society on 5 December last year or by Celia Heritage on 9 January this year, or use Zoom to join the live audience, or catch up by viewing Celia's talk through the Members' Portal of our website? If you missed out, Steve and Celia have kindly provided a summary of their talks below.

THE CREATION OF DICKENS' CHRISTMAS CAROL

Steve Dimmer



The talk was split into three sections. The first considered what Christmas was before the publication of the book in 1843. Christmas had been vigorously celebrated in Tudor times but with the rise of Oliver Cromwell and Puritan sentiments it was banned, although rural communities still defied this.

When the 19th century began, Britons wanted to resurrect the traditions, but they were all but lost. Up until 1820, authors such as Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving and painters like Daniel McClise imagined Christmases of yesteryear as golden happy equitable times of celebrations. These descriptions contributed to the growing desire by the Victorians to experience such times.

In 1843 Charles Dickens was in dire straits financially. Dickens was paid on results, and his latest novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* had a tenth of the subscription that his great success *The Old Curiosity Shop* had had. This coupled with he had just moved house and that his wife had given birth to the 5th of their 10 children meant he had to earn money quickly. So, in 6 weeks from mid-October, he wrote *A Christmas Carol*. 5000 copies were in the bookshops on 17th December, selling out by Christmas Eve. The book went through 4 reprints before the end of the year.

The book was the first Christmas ghost story, establishing a tradition that was embraced later in the century by authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell. It could also be considered the first time-travel story, swimming into the past and future of Scrooge's life, pictured above with the ghost of Jacob Marley, a good 60 years before H G Wells' *The Time Machine*.

It was an instant success and continued to sell steadily throughout Dickens life, getting an annual surge during the festive season.

The talk examined its legacy in other media. Apart from Sherlock Holmes, Scrooge is the most portrayed character of all times. The talk showed video clips of Alistair Sim in the 1951 film and Albert Finney's musical take in the 1970 film, as well as the first silent film version in 1901.

A Christmas Carol is an amazing tale of redemption and optimism that continues to resonate with everyone as they discover it. Hopefully the talk showed this.

REFRAMING ROOTS®

USING FAMILY HISTORY TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING OF OURSELVES

Celia Heritage



In her talk in January, professional genealogist, healer and author Celia Heritage explored how family history can help us understand the inherited experiences, beliefs and emotional patterns that may still influence our lives today.

Celia began by addressing the remarkable popularity of family history and asking why it resonates so strongly with so many people. While genealogy clearly provides a sense of connection, belonging and identity, she suggested there may be deeper therapeutic benefits to be found if we revisit our research in a new way. Family history, she argued, is not just

about names, dates and places, but about understanding the lived experiences of those who came before us and how those experiences shaped family mindsets that may still be affecting us today in the way we think, feel and behave.

The talk introduced the idea that what we inherit from our families goes far beyond DNA alone. While genetics clearly play a role, Celia outlined how upbringing, environment and family dynamics also leave lasting impressions. She touched on epigenetics, an

emerging field that explores how trauma and stress can affect the way genes are expressed across generations. Seen in this light, family history provides an important context for understanding behaviour, personality and emotional responses.

Celia suggested that family history research can be used as a powerful tool, either to simply satisfy our own natural curiosity about ourselves and why we are the way we are, but particularly for those who struggle with certain emotional patterns or aspects of their personality. She stressed, however, that this is not about blame or diagnosis. Instead, her Reframing Roots® approach is primarily about understanding and reframing the past so that it makes sense within its historical and emotional context. As a result, any negative emotional patterns we carry can be released, often spontaneously, but sometimes with help from a therapist. She also noted that, where research touches on distressing material, or if someone is particularly sensitive or anxious, appropriate support is important.

To illustrate these ideas, Celia shared a detailed case study, which formed the heart of the talk. The case study followed 'Leah', who appeared to have had a good childhood, a supportive family background, a strong education and a varied career. Despite this, Leah later experienced a profound emotional crisis following the sudden breakdown of a long and happy marriage. Therapy helped her understand how her mind worked, but it was when she combined this with family history research that deeper patterns began to emerge.

Leah identified longstanding issues: feeling unloved and unrecognised, difficulty speaking up spontaneously, fear of upsetting others, anger towards her father, and a sense of not fitting in. In her case, she came to understand that she was neurodiverse and a 'Highly Sensitive Person', which helped explain her heightened awareness of her environment and emotional responses.

The talk then explored Leah's childhood in more detail, particularly her relationship with her parents. Her mother was warm and supportive, while her father, Gerry, was strict, easily angered and emotionally distant. At work, Gerry was highly respected for his analytical abilities, but at home he struggled with noise, social interaction and emotional regulation. Order and routine helped him cope, and he placed a strong emphasis on financial security. In retrospect, many of these traits suggested that he too may have been neurodiverse.

Celia then demonstrated how family history research helped place Gerry's behaviour into a wider generational context. Gerry's mother had died when he was fourteen, and his own father, Frederick, was described as taciturn and emotionally reserved. Frederick himself had grown up in the East End of London as the youngest surviving child of a large family marked by repeated bereavements. He lost siblings throughout childhood, his father died when he was fourteen, and further losses followed in early adulthood. These experiences almost certainly contributed to a deep sense of insecurity and isolation.

Despite this, Frederick was financially astute and determined to improve his family's circumstances. He moved his family out of the East End and achieved stability, but his rigid attitudes to money and difficulty seeing alternative perspectives led to strained relationships and further isolation. Oral history suggested that Frederick, like his son and

granddaughter, may also have been neurodiverse. His employment as a tea taster would have required an acute sense of taste and smell, and this supports the possibility.

Extending the family tree back further revealed additional patterns. Early parental deaths recurred across generations, alongside sibling bereavements and emotional withdrawal. A strong 'money mindset' emerged, originally linked to entrepreneurial skill but later shaped by fear of scarcity following premature deaths. Emotional suppression, particularly among men, reflected both personal trauma and wider social norms of the period.

Through this process of reframing her roots, Leah was able to understand her father in a new way and release long-held anger towards him for not supporting her in the things she was talented and passionate about as a child. She recognised that his focus on financial security and self-sufficiency was his way of caring for her, shaped by his own experiences and those of earlier generations. This understanding also allowed her to stop subconsciously seeking his approval, and she began to feel less alone in her differences. Rather than seeing herself as flawed, she began to recognise the strengths and gifts associated with her neurodiversity.

Celia emphasised that Reframing Roots® is not about excusing harmful behaviour, nor is it a 'blame game'. Instead, it is about adding depth and context to our understanding of the past. For family historians, this approach can bring records to life in new ways. Documentary records and oral histories can all be re-examined with an awareness of loss, responsibility, fear and resilience. Celia also noted that many skilled genealogists who have adopted her approach have unexpectedly broken-down long-standing documentary brick walls as a result of thinking again about their research in this way.

The talk concluded by suggesting that Reframing Roots® offers family historians a way to enrich their research by focusing on the human experience behind the documents. Whether used simply as an intellectual exercise or as part of deeper personal exploration, this approach encourages us to see both our ancestors and ourselves with greater compassion, curiosity and understanding. As a result, we may release long-held negative thought patterns that have been detrimental to our happiness.

During question time after the talk, Celia acknowledged that questions often arise around the role of epigenetics and whether emotional patterns are inherited biologically or learned through upbringing. She emphasised that, at the level of individual families, it is rarely possible to separate these influences with certainty, and that this is rarely necessary. Reframing Roots® does not suggest that people who experience similar traumas will respond in the same way, nor does it claim that emotional patterns are biologically determined. Instead, it recognises that family experiences, neurodiversity, social expectations and possible biological factors interact in complex and individual ways. Whether a pattern arises through nurture, nature, or a combination of both, the value lies in understanding how it has shaped behaviour and beliefs within a particular family over time and how these may be affecting a particular individual today.

If you would like to find out more about Celia's work, you can visit her website at **www.mindpebble.co.uk** or find her on *YouTube* at **@MindPebbleHealingHub**.

BOOK REVIEW

“The Lugsdin Family of Bedfordshire, England, and their Diaspora”, Graham Lugsdin, IngramSpark, 2025

This summary has been provided by the author. Our Journal would be interested in an independent review of the book if you have read it.

Graham LUGSDIN, whose great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother emigrated to Melbourne, Victoria, Australia in 1852 has recently authored his third book on the Lugsdin Family.

The book documents the Lugsdin lineage, their lives, their time and the farms they lived on in the County of Bedfordshire from the 1600s and the subsequent movement of family members to Canada and Australia. Some associations with other Lugsdin families in England in the 20th century are also documented.

In Riseley the family lived at ‘Riseley Lodge Farm’ and ‘Town Farm’, both pictured below, but also lived at Little Staughton and Wilde, and Croxton in Cambridgeshire. Family members are buried in the non-conformist graveyard and the Anglican graveyard in Little Staughton.



Riseley Lodge Farm c1908



Town Farm c1908

Extracts from a number of documents deposited with the Bedfordshire Archives, Bedford County Record Office, Society of Genealogists and from Bedfordshire related publications and websites are the source of the historical information, as well as from original photographs, diaries and letters of numerous family members dating from the 1850s.

Correspondence between far-flung family members, diaries and photograph albums of family members' visits back to 'the old country' as well as visits to North America have enabled a more detailed picture to be drawn of the life and times and of Lugsdin ancestors in Bedfordshire and overseas.

Visits in 1908, 1937, 1950 and later years by descendants of John and Mary Lugsdin back to Riseley, Little Staughton and Sharnbrook and to the families of John's half-brother LADDS and his brother James in North America are recounted.

Details of Mary, nee STONEBANKS', sisters' families (COLES, HORNE and ANSTISS) are teased out from old family letters and diaries.

An example of one of the letters¹ contained in the book follows:

*Dear Brother,*²

I have nothing to do so will pen you a few lines to let you know we are & how we found things. We are both well & enjoying ourselves. We stoped in London a

¹ Trip to Sharnbrook & Riseley, Letter of James William Lugsdin, 6 June 1908.

² Frank (original spelling retained)

fortnight & then went to Sharnbrook on the Friday.³ Frederick Coles⁴ met us at the Station & took us to a Mr & Mrs NEWELS where we stoped. She made us very welcome & comfortable. On the Saturday I got a trap & Sarah, Coles, Young Newel,⁵ & me went to Riseley & saw the house where I was born. We called on a old woman a lace maker when Newel said I was Lugsdin she said what John Lugsdin & grasped my hand. I told her I was his son & she was delighted & showed us the house Father was born in. She is 83, & still lace making⁶. It is very pretty Country all round there. on the Sunday Coles took us up to the old farm his father used to have ... Harry Coles lost his wife our aunt⁷, a few years after Father was home he married again a widow with some family. He had no children by her. There were two boys & a girl by the first wife. None of them married. The girl died a few years ago I don't think Harry left them much. The girl had to go as a governess. Fred is a nice harmless chap but not very bright & I think the other son drinks & is no good. We left there on Monday ...

I got the trap at Sharnbrook from a publican & he told me the month before there had been a Lugsdin from America⁸ the month before got a trap to Riseley. He gave me his card he was a furrier from Indiaopoliss.

... Some of the Anstices are Keeping publick houses. I called at one but there were none of the Anstices in the first cousins are all dead so did not trouble to call at their private house ...

I think F Coles has just about enough to Keep him one of his step Brothers bought him an annuity with what he had and he gets it weekly, with love I remain

Your affect Brother JW Lugsdin."

The publication of 135 pages contains over 140 photographs, descendant charts, illustrations and maps. Surnames covered include LILES, PEPPERCORN, DOBEY, THORNS, SUMPTER, Ladds, HOWARD, SWANNELL, TOPHAM and Stonebanks.

The book is only available as a print-on-demand book from good online booksellers.

³ 29 May 1908

⁴ Cousin of JWL, son of his mother Mary Stonebanks' sister Catherine

⁵ Likely Newell. There is an At Home invitation in the albums from Thomas & Kathleen (nee Newell) Bainbridge, who were married on 25 Aug 1910

⁶ This most likely would be Mary Carrington, 27 High Street, Riseley, who sent a piece of lace in a letter dated 28 May 1912 [Family Letter no 67] and wrote "Dear Madam Hoping you are well and I know you have not forgotten me and I have sent you a bit of my lace for you to look at when I am gone you may think I made it for you. With very kind love both to you and Mr Lugsdin. Yours faithfully M Carrington. With thanks"

⁷ Catherine Stonebanks

⁸ James Lugsdin, stepcousin, son of Ladds William Lugsdin



The FHF Really Useful Family History Show is coming to East Anglia!

AGRA, Alde Valley Suffolk FH Group, Bedfordshire FHS, Burwell Museum, Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire FHS, Cambridgeshire Archive Services, Cambridgeshire Collection, Cromwell Museum, FamilySearch, Family Tree Maker, East of London FHS, Essex Society for FH, Family History Federation, Fenland FHS, FIBIS, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertfordshire FHS, Lincolnshire FHS, London, Westminster & Middlesex FHS, Northamptonshire FHS, Nuneaton & Warwickshire FHS, Overdale Postcards, Orders & Medals Research Society, Peterborough & District FHS, Pharos Tutors, RA Longley Publications, Romany & Traveller FHS, Suffolk FHS, This Way Books & Cassini Maps, WeAre.xyz

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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.

REMINDER

CLOSING DATE for articles for publication in the *Journal* are as follows:

March: 31 January.

June: 30 April.

September: 31 July.

December: 31 October.

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



Bedfordshire Family History Society has a presence
on Facebook for news and discussions:

facebook.com/BedfordshireFamilyHistorySociety

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.

Parish	Price	Issue	Parish	Price	Issue
Ampthill † *	£15	2	Dunton †	£15	2
Arlesey	£20	2	Eaton Bray	£20	2
Aspley Guise †	£15	4	Eaton Socon † *	£25	2
Astwick †	£10	2	Edworth †	£10	2
Barton	£15	3	Elstow †	£15	2
Battlesden	£10	2	Eversholt †	£15	2
Bedford St Cuthbert †*	£15	2	Everton	£10	2
Bedford St John *	£15	2	Eyeworth	£10	2
Bedford St Mary † *	£15	2	Farndish †	£10	1
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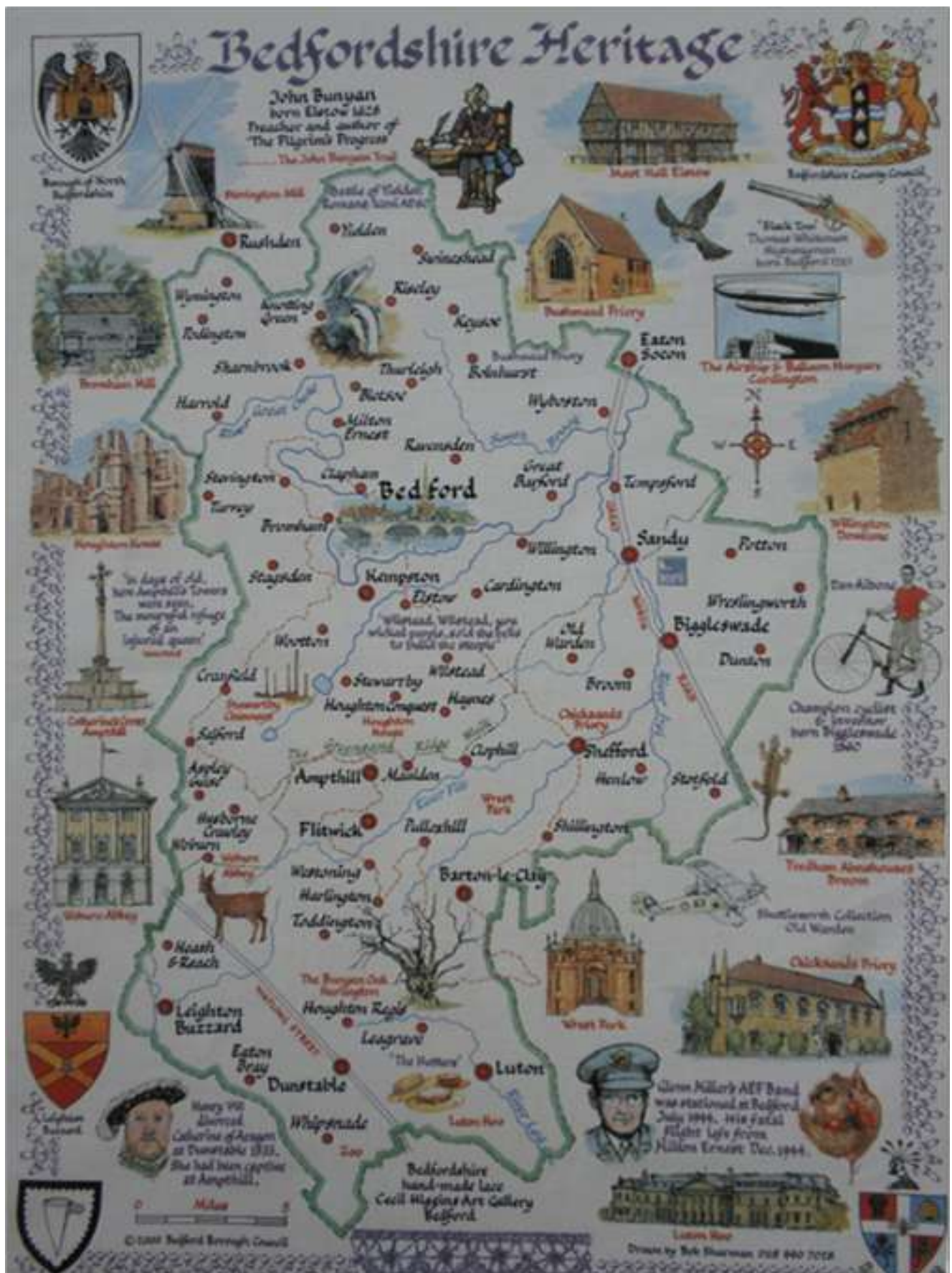
Your committee is continually looking for ways to improve what is offered to members. So, to encourage more feedback from members at meetings we now have a suggestion



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.

BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TEA TOWEL



WHERE TO FIND US

Correspondence for the Executive Committee should be addressed to the appropriate person and sent to:

Bedfordshire Family History Society

PO Box 214 BEDFORD MK41 8WB	Internet: Email:	bfhs.org.uk bfhs@bfhs.org.uk
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The following email addresses are also available:

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(1 January - 31 December)

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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.