

NEWSLETTER

Dunstable & District Local History Society
No. 39 February 2013



Chairman's Notes

Jean Yates, the enthusiastic leader of Dunstable's Medieval Project, gave an inspirational talk to this society when she outlined the ambitious plans to mark Dunstable Priory's 800th anniversary this year.

The scale of what will be happening apparently took some of our members by surprise, which is in itself surprising because this society is heavily involved and the work has been well publicised by local papers and radio.

So let me make sure you are all up to speed by giving a brief outline of the project's progress.



Hugh St Pierre Bunbury's splendid illustration of a medieval tournament

PRIORY MEADOW

The Manshead Archaeological Society has carried out a detailed geophysical survey of Priory Meadow, under which lie the remaining walls of the old monastery. There have been numerous new discoveries, which have been interpreted by history society member Tony Woodhouse in a series of drawings giving us our best idea yet of what the Augustinian Priory must have looked like. One of his illustrations was recently published in the Gazette. He has also produced impressions of the inside of the monastery, which are being used for a virtual reality tour of the building on the project's website.

Work is afoot to mark out the Priory Meadow site and provide explanatory noticeboards. Audio guides, complete with sound effects, are being produced for visitors to the Priory, with a script written by Jean Yates. Hugh Garrod has spent many months poring over documents in the British Library to amplify what he already knew about the Priory's history, and his work will be part of a Medieval Project book to be published later this year. He will also be giving two talks to the society, one about the Augustinian Priory and another about what happened in the centuries after Henry VIII's decision to close it.

HERBAL GARDEN

A herbal garden is to be planted near Priory House, growing authentic examples of the medicinal remedies available to the canons.

ANNALS OF DUNSTABLE

A translation from the medieval Latin of the Annals of Dunstable, the year-by-year diary of local and national events maintained at the Priory, has now been completed and will be published this year. The Vicar of Harlington, Stephen Williams, who is a great friend of this society, will be

talking about the Annals at our meeting on May 14, which will be an appropriate introduction to events featuring the Medieval Siege Society on Priory Meadow on May 18 and 19.

Our secretary, Joan Curran, has been immersed in manuscripts to produce an article on what life was like in medieval Dunstable. This will be part of the book mentioned earlier, which will also include the discoveries of Jean Yates about the riches of the Priory, which owned land (and even a lead mine!) in numerous parts of the country. And I have been working on an article about tournaments in Dunstable, which were great

melees involving many hundreds of famous knights from all over the country. I think people will be surprised to learn just how important Dunstable was as a national venue for these huge events.

David Turner, our vice chairman, is gathering together illustrations from all this work to create a display in the newly refurbished exhibition area at Priory House. And the project website (www.medievaldunstable.org.uk) contains articles and details of forthcoming concerts and other events.

DAVID CRADDOCK

David Craddock, the Luton historian who was due to give a talk to the society in April about Captain William Peel, Bedfordshire's first VC, suffered a stroke at a Luton Town football match in December. Thanks to the prompt attention of St John's Ambulance Brigade members and the football club's doctor, he is now recovering, but understandably he has had to cancel his talk.

We are very lucky that Alan Turton, a military historian who has been an advisor to such well-known tv programmes as *Timewatch* and *Simon Schama's History of Britain*, is able to visit us instead. Alan, who is married to Nicola (one of our members) will be talking about the life of a soldier in the English Civil War. Perhaps he will identify those responsible for the bullet holes in the Priory Church door!

• My search for something to illustrate my story of tournaments in Dunstable led me to an edition of the *Boys Own Paper* published in January 1914. This includes a splendid illustration of tournament heralds sounding the advance for the sort of melee for which Dunstable was once famous. It was painted by Hugh St Pierre Bunbury, whose distinctive name also appears on a war memorial in Bedford. Does anyone know if they are one and the same?

John Buckledee

Bedfordshire's First VC

by David Craddock



(David had been due to speak to our society in April but has had to cancel because of illness. John Buckledee has written this summary of his projected talk, based on David's detailed research).

The first Bedfordshire man to be awarded the Victoria Cross – the medal instituted in 1856 to honour exceptional acts of bravery – was Captain William Peel, of Sandy.

His valour was truly extraordinary. His medal has three dates inscribed on it and is one of the very few crosses awarded for multiple exploits.

HMS DIAMOND

Peel had become the youngest captain in the Royal Navy when he was promoted in 1849 at just 25 years of age. He was in command of the frigate HMS Diamond in 1854 when the Crimean War broke out and became part of the Navy Brigade formed to use the navy's heavy guns on land, thus augmenting the army's artillery in the bombardment of Sebastopol.

This began on October 17 1854 but the Russians pre-empted the attack by shelling the British batteries first.

It was during this action, on October 18, that Captain Peel's first act of exceptional bravery took place.

A Russian 42-pound shell landed inside the Diamond Battery, named after his ship. His men threw themselves to the ground, but Peel calmly picked up the unexploded shell and threw it outside. It exploded in mid-air without harming him or any of his men.

BATTLE OF INKERMAN

His second award for bravery came of November 5 1854 at the Battle of Inkerman. The Grenadier Guards were fighting in an emplacement called Sandbag Battery, a position they had lost and regained seven times during the day.

From his vantage point Peel realised they were in danger of being cut off. Taking a midshipman with him, Peel made his way to the centre of the action to warn the commander, the Duke of Cambridge, what the Russians were doing. With his help they managed to fight their way back to the British lines, thus saving a member of the Royal family and the company's colours from capture.

BATTLE OF THE REDAN

The third act of bravery took place on June 18 1855 at the battle of the Redan which had a defensive wall measuring between 24 and 26 feet high. Peel offered himself and his men to act as the ladder party.

Seventy of his men and a number of soldiers began to make their way over 500 yards of open, gun-swept ground. The first obstacle they had to clamber over was a five-foot high timber buttress, four feet wide. A further hundred yards uphill was a ditch 11 feet deep and 15 feet wide. Finally, there were the 26-foot high ramparts where the defenders stood four deep.



Capt Peel, complete with sword

The attacks were poorly co-ordinated so it was no surprise that the British suffered heavy casualties. Of the Naval Brigade, six officers and 53 men were killed or wounded.

INJURED

Peel managed to advance some 200 yards before he was shot in the arm and lost a great deal of blood. Fortunately for him a midshipman, Edmund Daniel, managed to staunch the wound with a tourniquet and get him back to the British lines. For this act of bravery and for saving his commander Daniel was also awarded the Victoria Cross.

SWISS COTTAGE

Because of his injury Peel was sent back to England and made a full recovery on his estate at Sandy where he had built a house known as the Swiss Cottage. He had purchased the land with money inherited from his father, Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel (founder of today's modern police force) who had died in 1850. It is now the headquarters of the RSPB.

While at Sandy William Peel was asked to look into the feasibility of building a railway from Pottton to Sandy. He took up the challenge enthusiastically, purchased the land required, and the line was completed in 1857. He also provided the money for a locomotive which he named Shannon, named after the 51-gun HMS Shannon which he commanded on his return to the Navy after convalescence. The locomotive still survives and can be seen at the Didcot Railway Centre.

INDIAN MUTINY

Peel sailed to India in July 1857 to take part in the fight to quell the Indian mutiny. HMS Shannon anchored at Calcutta and Peel was ordered to take his Navy Brigade to the besieged city of Lucknow, 1,400 miles away.

Peel and his 454 men made their way overland and by river, taking with them six 68-pound guns, eight 24-pound guns, two eight-inch howitzers and eight rocket tubes. It took them two months.

During the action outside Lucknow Peel was hit in the thigh by a bullet. Peel refused to travel in a coach for what was expected to be a six-week convalescence, insisting that he be carried on a *dulhi*, a Indian form of stretcher, like the rest of the wounded.

SMALLPOX

At Cawnpore, Peel was well enough to dine with Lord Roberts but the following morning he had a high fever and smallpox was diagnosed. He died on April 27 1858 aged 33. It was a death in a manner Peel had most feared, illness. He had wanted to die in battle and his courageous exploits marked him as someone possibly with a death wish. He was buried in the British cemetery at Cawnpore which is now completely overgrown. There is no memorial to mark his grave and no documentation to give a clue where it might be.

WELLINGTON TERRACE



A few months ago I was given this photo of Wellington Terrace, Dunstable by Christine Harrison, Head of History at Priory Academy who in turn had been given it by Sue Neale who used to live at No. 2.

WELLINGTON PARADE

Originally called Wellington Parade, Richard Walden states in his book 'Streets Ahead' that they were listed in the 1851 census, but I've been unable to find it listed until 1861. No-one seems to know for sure when they were built but a clue lies in the name – Duke of Wellington died in 1853, so it's a fair bet that they were built around that time. The name had been changed to Wellington Terrace by the 1871 census.

The photo was taken in the early part of the twentieth century, no earlier than 1901, but possibly just after. The houses, a terrace as the name suggests of six houses, run to the rear of High Street South, accessed from Britain Street by a short road which stops short of the shared front gardens.

LILY POTTER

In 1901 Mr Potter lived at no. 5 and it is believed to be him or his son shown on the right of the photo. The 1911 census showed that Mr Potter had passed away as his widow, Olive, is listed as living there aged 67. Also listed is her daughter, Lily, who was a straw hat sewer aged 37 and her son Albert aged 20 listed as a boring machinist (Does this mean he was uninteresting?) both single. Lily was 100 in 1974 and still living there. Her centenary was celebrated with the pupils of Priory School going to sing to her. It was Lily who originally owned the photo and gave it to her neighbour Sue Neal. Lily died in 1979 aged 105.

THE SAUSAGE KING OF DUNSTABLE

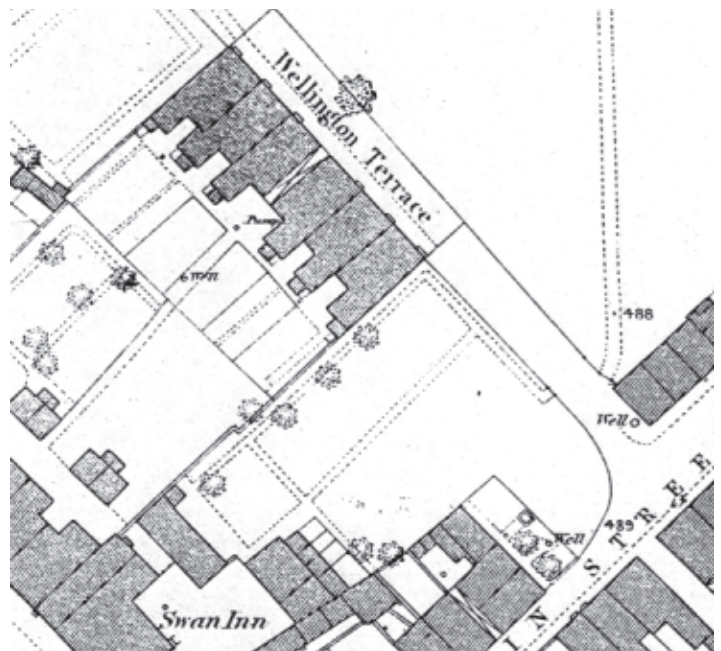
Mr Ernie White, who lived at number 1 from 1913, had the meadow, known as Star Close, where he kept a horse and cows. He probably leased the land from the Chew's Trust. According to the school log, his horse followed the children into school one day and wandered into the school building itself, after the gate was left open that led from Star Close Path to the school. The path ran diagonally across the field from Priory Church to Britain Street/Wellington Terrace corner and can just be seen on the pictured 1888 Ordnance Survey Map. Mr White had two sons, Harold and Arthur, and one of them used to have the task of catching the horse each morning. Mr. White apparently had a butcher's shop in the town and was affectionately known as the 'The Sausage King of Dunstable'.

David Turner



House No.	Name (or Surname) of Occupier	Sex and Date of Birth	Age	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Married in England, etc.	Particulars of Marriages
1	John Carter	Male	45	Labourer	Wellingborough		
2	John Carter	Female	42	Labourer	Wellingborough		
3	John Carter	Male	38	Labourer	Wellingborough		
4	John Carter	Female	35	Labourer	Wellingborough		
5	John Carter	Male	32	Labourer	Wellingborough		
6	John Carter	Female	29	Labourer	Wellingborough		

Page from 1861, the earliest Census showing entries for Wellington Place



1880 Ordnance Survey map showing Wellington Terrace and the path running diagonally across the school field to the Priory Church field

Greeting New Members

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following new members:

- Christopher Charman
- Miss Kelly Furlong
- Miss Helena Willis
- Geoff Curran
- Mr B Rowland



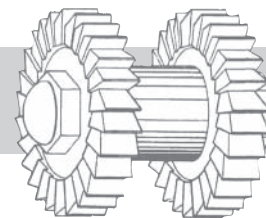
Sad Farewell



We are very sorry to announce the sad loss of

- Mrs. Joy Bourne
- Mrs Tessa Carroll

'MILLING' DUNSTABLE by Tony Woodhouse



J Harrison Carter Ltd was an engineering firm which came to Dunstable in 1894 and closed in 1957. It occupied a site on the west side of Bull Pond Lane where Furness Avenue is now. Its main gate was just to the right of the top of Garden Road.

The title of this article was the telegraphic address of the works and gave an indication of the type of machinery that it manufactured. Its main product was machinery which 'milled' (broke down) by crushing, or by impact, bulky materials into small particles, or powder.

In addition the Company also frequently designed and manufactured, to customer order, a variety of conveyors and elevators, to carry the materials to and from these mills, and a range of mixing machines to blend and emulsify the newly ground materials into food and mineral products.

Many of the milling machines that it produced were also specially designed to meet specific properties of the materials being dressed, so were therefore very varied in shape, size and in the way in which they milled the material.

CARTER DISINTEGRATOR

There was, however, a popular standard mill which was produced exclusively by Harrison Carter and that was sold as the 'Carter disintegrator'.

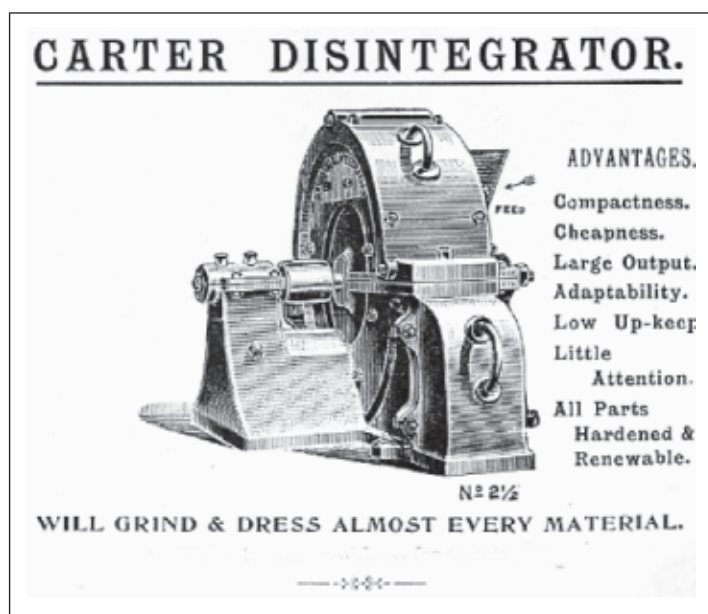


Fig.1 The drawing, which comes from a J.H.C advertisement, shows a disintegrator. The hopper on the right feeds the raw material into a grinding chamber inside the large cylindrical outer casing. In this chamber the material is smashed up, by impact with some fast moving steel bars which protrude from the rotating hub at its centre. When the material pieces are small enough they are able to pass through 'screens' into the outlet, which is not visible on the far side of the casing. The extension, on the left, supports the drive pulley wheel and drive shaft which turned the hub with its steel bar (beaters) at over 1000 revolutions a minute.

Dictionary definition – Disintegrator; A machine for grinding, or pulverising by percussion.

Carter disintegrators were sold in increasing sizes which were designated by the increasing numbers; eg. 1 ½, 2 ½, up to 6 ½

It was a tough, simple and effective machine. It was designed by James Harrison Carter, who with, his chief engineer George Carter (my great-grandfather), set up the factory in Dunstable principally to manufacture it.

It proved to be very popular and remained the bread and butter product of the Company throughout its time in Dunstable. It was purchased by many farms, factories and mines, all over Britain, Empire and beyond, to break down organic and mineral raw materials into particles of a specified size (this sizing process is technically known as dressing), so that they could then be easily consumed, mixed, transported, or otherwise further processed.

James Harrison Carter, after studying, milling engineering in Hungary, had been for about ten years with E.R. F. Turner Manufacturing Engineers of Ipswich as their milling expert;

George Carter (no relation to him) had worked as the manufacturing engineer of Fell, Christy and Norris at the Broomfield Road Ironworks in Chelmsford.

HARRISON CARTER'S WORKFORCE

Some of Harrison Carter's initial skilled labour force also came with George Carter to Dunstable from Fell, Christy and Norris, who in 1894 were short of work.

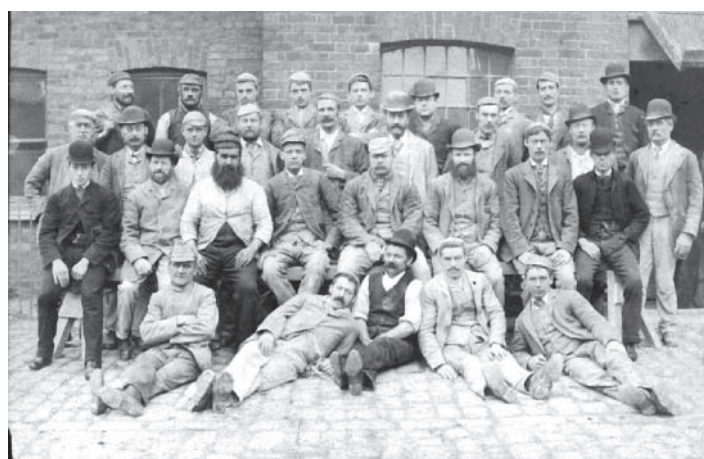


Fig. 2. James Harrison Carter, centre; standing among his initial workforce from Chelmsford. He is in front of the forge window with a moustache beard and a light suit and bowler. George Carter, my great grandfather, is on extreme right. This photograph was loaned to me by me by Una Basham; her grandfather James Leech and my grandfather Frank Carter are among the young men in the back row.

Fell, Christy and Norris may have first manufactured the Carter Disintegrator for Harrison Carter as he already had a Company sales office in Mark Lane in London when he came to Dunstable. It was from this office that he carried out the negotiations with Estate Agents Derbyshire & Son, Dunstable Council and R.W. Sinfield, the builder, for the land, planning permission and the erection of his new works.

'MILLING' DUNSTABLE continued

It also seems that there may have been a connection with Fell, Christy and Norris and Turners; because although Fell, Christy and Norris no longer exists, Turners now produce disintegrators, under the name of 'Christy Turner' in Ipswich. When Harrison Carter's closed in Dunstable the rights of manufacture of Harrison Carter's disintegrators and spares were taken over by them.

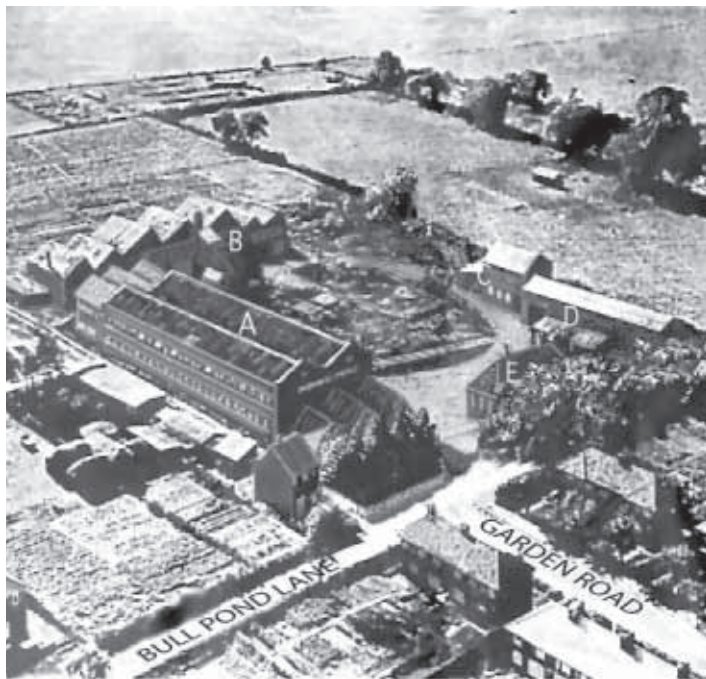


Fig. 3 An aerial view of the J. Harrison Carter Works taken in the 1930s showing its main buildings. Not much had changed in 1950 except that a railway which connected the main buildings with the dispatch store had been removed.

(Photo computer enhanced by A Woodhouse)

THE NEW FACTORY

The new factory (shown in Fig 3) covered about a hectare (2 acres) of land. It consisted, in the 1950s, of a large building which ran east to west from the top of Garden road (A) and included the assembly (fitting shop), 2 machine shops, a wood / pattern shop and engineer's stores. At its western end and at right angles to it was a second large building (B) in which there was a forge and a foundry. Three other buildings, a drawing office with a canteen above (C), a dispatch / spares store (D) and the administration office (E) next to the main gate on Bull Pond Lane completed its layout.

ZEPPELIN ATTACK

During its 63 years of operation there were two historical incidents of note: In 1916 it was bombed by a Zeppelin. Broken windows and few large craters behind the foundry were the only result, but it is said that this incident was a factor in the demise of the famous town historian Worthington G Smith.

In December 1925 the Harrison Carter was the first factory in Dunstable to make use of the new electric power supply from Luton. It was switched on, at the works, with great ceremony, by the wife of Cecil May, the then millionaire owner of the factory.

Christy Turner still manufacture disintegrators to the same design and often receive orders for spare parts for Harrison Carter made machines from all over Britain and the World, showing that even 55 years after the closure of the company some of their simple, effective, compact and cheap milling machines must still be running. A tribute to James Harrison Carter's design and the Dunstable engineers, who for many years built his disintegrators.

Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674-1913

Another case with a Dunstable connection from the website **The Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online: Thomas Butler, tried for Violent Theft on 13th January 1721.**

Thomas Butler of St. Andrew in Holbourn, was indicted for feloniously stealing a Gold Watch, a Silk Night-Gown, and 6 Holland Shirts, in all to the value of £26, the Goods of Sir Justinian Isham, Bart. a Silver Watch. a Sword and 8 Guineas, the Goods and Money of John Whitacre; and £14 8s. 6d. the Money of Edward Freeman, on the 12th of January, 1719. John Whitacre deposed, that as he was travelling with Sir Justinian Isham, they were Assaulted by 3 Men near Dunstable in Hertfordshire [sic], that one of them took Sir Justinian out of his Chariot, and another (he believed the Prisoner) took him out; that he gave him what Money he had, but the Prisoner askt for his Watch, which he had hid under the Seat in the Chariot, and which the Prisoner afterwards found; that they took Sir Justinian's Pocket-Book and Key; took the Trunk and were going to break it open, but that he (this Evidence) gave them the Key; that they took out of the Trunk

a Gold Watch, a Night-Gown, 6 Shirts, a Silver Hilted Sword and £14 in Money.

That the Prisoner owned when taken that he had Sir Justinian's Gold Watch and Night-Gown, and this Evidence's Watch and a Ring for his Share; and that he wore the Night-Gown, which was found in his Lodging and produced in Court, and swore to be the same that was taken out of the Trunk aforesaid. The Woman of the House where he lodged, near Red-Lion-Square in Middlesex; deposed that he went by the Name of Esq; Becket; wore Black Velvet, Lace Ruffles, and every thing else answerable. John Osgood deposed, that about Half a Year after the Robbery, he received a Letter from the Prosecutor to enquire after the Prisoner; who owned, that himself, one Smith, who was executed at Maidstone, and Jack – in Ireland, who went for his Footman, committed the Fact, and owned to him (this Evidence) all the Particulars, saying it signified nothing, to conceal any any thing, for he was to be an Evidence. The Jury found him Guilty. Penalty: Death.



David Turner

IS THIS A RECORD?



Archives are not the only records our county record office holds – it also holds the record for being the very first county record office to be established anywhere in England.

Set up in 1913 by Dr. G.H. Fowler it has been collecting and preserving archives ever since. It was originally housed in the Shire Hall, near St Paul's Church in Bedford, where it stayed until it moved across the river in the 1960s. It was then transferred into purpose-built accommodation in a building adjoining the new County Hall, where it still is.



Dr George Herbert Fowler

Though it is still in the same place, and still provides the same high-standard service, covering the whole historic county of Bedfordshire, what is not the same is its name and address. When Luton became a unitary authority in 1973 the name was changed to reflect this and the record office became the Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service, a name which does not exactly trip off the tongue easily, so is often shortened to the acronym BLARS. In the last local government re-shuffle, when the county was split into two parts, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, it was decreed that County Hall should in future be known as Borough Hall and the adjoining building as Riverside Building. But like the rose that smells as sweet whatever you call it, the record office remains essentially the same as it always was, whatever its name, with a few technological innovations to keep up with the times, of course.

Admission to the office is free, it is open four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Weds and Friday) and there are no formalities for visitors other than signing in at the reception desk.

What can you find there? There are records from big estates like those of Woburn and Luton Hoo, from ancient manors and town councils, from Bedford gaol, from the Diocese of St. Albans, from local firms and industries, from local authorities and local recreational clubs, school log books, rate assessments, census returns, parish registers and vestry minutes, deeds (ancient and modern) and sale catalogues, old maps, etc., etc., etc., as the King of Siam might have said.

In its centenary year the Archives Service is organising a number of events around the county to celebrate its 100th birthday. Listed below are some which are taking place near here and that you might be interested in.

March 22 – June 23 Wardown Park Museum, Luton.

Exhibition telling the story of Bedfordshire records, from 12th century parchment to the latest computer files. There will be some sessions when staff will be available to answer questions.

April 15 John Dony Field Centre, Luton. 7.30 pm

Talk on some of the scandalous events which have taken place in Bedfordshire. (Hosted by Luton Historical Society. Small admission fee.)



Shire Hall in 1920, the original home of the county record office

April 18 Wardown Park Museum

Patience, jigsaws and other games archivists play. Archivists explain what they do all day and why just a love of history is not the only requirement for the job.

May 8 Wardown Park Museum, Luton (time t.b.a.)

Talk by historical novelist, Sara Sheridan.

June 5 Wardown Park Museum, Luton (time t.b.a.)

Nick Barratt, editor-in-chief of the magazine Your Family History, talks about the future of history.

August 6 Dunstable Library 10.30-12 noon

Delectable documents: an exhibition of documents covering 800 years of Bedfordshire history.

Lastly and most importantly there will be a:

COUNTYWIDE QUIZ EVENING

organised by BLARS

at the **Forest Centre at Marston Moretaine**
on **Thursday, 23rd May, at 7.00 pm.**

History societies across the county are invited to enter one or more teams of six people. This is not just a local history quiz – there will be mixture of general knowledge and Bedfordshire related questions. If you are interested in taking part please contact Joan Curran or John Buckledee. Tickets are £5. Don't worry about transport – we can sort that out between us. As one of the largest history societies in the county we ought to be able to make up a team (or possibly even two?).

If you have not been there, the Marston Vale Forest Centre is worth a visit. It is one of a number of community forests being developed to regenerate land around towns which has been scarred by industrialisation. It covers some 61 square miles between Bedford and Milton Keynes and includes miles of footpaths and cycle paths (you can hire a bike), a wetland nature reserve, new forest areas, a children's play centre and much more (including the two essentials, a café and a bar).

Joan Curran

Redbourn Museum Trust have arranged a talk about:

'PLAGUE, PROTEST AND PILGRIMAGE'

on **February 23rd at 2.00 pm**

at the **New Parish Centre, Redbourn.**

It is the story of Redbourn in the 13th century. Tickets are £7.50 and include afternoon tea. They can be bought at the florist's, ARRANGEMENTS, in advance or at the door on the day. The speaker is Roy Craske

ESCAPE OF PRISONERS



On 27th November, 1886 The Times Newspaper reported the following story:

THE TIMES NEWSPAPER

Five little boys who were remanded at Dunstable the other day on a charge of stealing from shop doors have had an extraordinary escapade.

It seemed that the person who had supplied the lad's dinner had by mistake left the key in the door of the cell, and the youngest boy, who is very small and thin, managed to squeeze himself through the aperture by which food is handed to the prisoners, and then unlock the door for his companions. Their escape was quite unnoticed and was not discovered until sometime afterwards. When it was found that they had decamped Superintendent George drove off in a conveyance in the direction of St. Albans, while two other officers and a number of local volunteers dispersed in various directions in search of the runaways. Meanwhile the boys had made their way to Skimpot Farm, just outside the town. Here they observed a number of fowls running about, and catching one they wrung its neck, and took it to the mistress at the farmhouse, informing her that they found it on the railway run over by a train. Praising their honesty and believing their tale the woman regaled the young scapegraces with tea, and presented them with 6d. They then proceeded in the direction of Houghton Regis, but near that place they were observed by Police Sergeant Addington, who chased them for a considerable distance till he lost sight of them in Chiltern Road. The lads, determined not to be caught, quietly returned to town, and the surprise of the superintendent's wife may be imagined

when, on answering a knock at the station door, she found the runaways before her. They told her that they had been 'out for a run and had come back to tea'. When her husband returned late in the evening he was not a little astonished to hear that the boys to whom he had been in quest were 'at home and had been in bed for hours'.

DUNSTABLE BOROUGH GAZETTE 24 NOVEMBER 1886

The Dunstable Borough Gazette carried the same story but printed very little detailed information and seemed more interested in reporting it as an amusing escapade to the embarrassment of the local constabulary. The first few lines of the article concerns two people talking about the prisoners escaping from the Lock-Up. Superintendent George it was explained had gone off in a trap from the Red Lion and headed for St. Albans. P. C. Tofield or Toey as he was known, relied on Shank's pony while Sergeant Addington was somewhere in the area. A description of the key being left in the door and the smallest boy releasing his friends did agree with The Times but then the article changes direction. People found it amusing because the police didn't know in which direction to look for the boys...

'Such was the substance of the conversation going on at the Chrysanthemum Show on Friday afternoon, and everybody was on the broad grin. I overheard the story repeated in brief to one of the Magistrates and didn't he enjoy it! For a time I felt for his waistcoat buttons – poor things how they must have suffered, from the strain which he put upon them.'

Rita Swift



Memories of old Dunstable

John Buckledee is collecting anecdotes about old Dunstable and district and always welcomes contributions. Phone him on 01582 703107.

BEN SCOTT

Christina Scott, who was the first headmistress of Queen Eleanor's School, Dunstable, has presented the society with a comprehensive set of scrapbooks recording events when her father was Mayor of Dunstable in 1952, 1953 and 1954.

Ben Scott owned the Scott and Sons garage and engineering works in High Street South, based mainly in premises next to Priory House. He was secretary of Dunstable Chamber of Trade, a founder member of Dunstable Rotary Club and a governor of Dunstable Grammar School, to name but a few of the local organisations he supported. He was a fount of knowledge about Dunstable – I have a copy of his notes which he used as a memory aid when he gave talks about the history of the town.

The scrapbooks abound with cuttings from the Gazette, including a photo of Alderman Scott on the steps of the town hall reading the proclamation announcing the date of the Coronation of the Queen. Traffic in the high street was halted for the event.

He took part in the ceremony when an extension to Dunstable Cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Bedford, welcomed tv personality Joan Gilbert (of Picture Page fame) to a fete in Grove House Gardens, and bowled the first wood at the opening of the new bowling green at Luton Road rec.

continued overleaf



Alderman Scott addressing a fete at Grove House Gardens in June 1953. Opera singer Martin Lawrence is third from the left

Memories of old Dunstable continued



He presented a trophy to Dan Grady, captain of Dunstable Town Cricket Club, after the team's victory over AC-Sphinx in the Dunstable Cricket Cup, played at the ground of Cross and Co.

He led a civic service to commemorate the centenary of the Edward Street Congregational Church and unveiled a bronze plaque on the town's war memorial in Priory Gardens bearing the names of Dunstable people killed in the two world wars.

He opened a hobbies exhibition in the Pioneer Boys Club which included a model of the Priory Church made with 3,862 matchsticks by Edwin Aldous and a display of postage stamps by local auctioneer Lewis Tearle. He launched appeal funds for victims of flood disasters at Lynnmouth and Essex, and met the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin, when the statesman paid a nostalgic visit to Dunstable Grammar School where he had been a pupil from 1911. Among the masters the PM remembered were Leslie Boskett and W.D. Coales.

The Mayor handed over the keys to the first tenants of Dunstable's 500th council dwelling – a flat at 56 Spinney Crescent – and displayed a strong left foot when he kicked off a ladies football match between Totternhoe and South London – Totternhoe lost 10-1.

There was a regular series of events in the large garden of the house at 27 Priory Road, the home of Mr and Mrs A. Reingand. A garden party there in 1953 was opened by opera singer Martin Lawrence in aid of the Jerusalem Baby Home.

THE OLD WINDMILL IN WEST STREET

Memories of the old windmill in West Street, now the home of Dunstable Sea Cadets, come from Michael Wilson, of Emmer Green, Reading.

The mill, whose future had been very much in doubt, was bought by Admiral Sir Lionel Preston in 1942 to create a base for the cadets, and it has never looked back since. It is now a buzz of activity, and the top of its tower is full of transmission equipment for a mobile phone company, for which the cadet unit receives a useful rent.

Michael, however, is remembering earlier days, just before and during World War Two, when the mill was occupied by the Old Mill Club. His father used to help there behind the bar and Michael can recall watching table tennis in a circular room while eating cheese (Velvita) sandwiches.

ROLLER SKATING

There was roller skating on a concrete pitch in front of the mill and the club organised evening picnics in the countryside, with car headlights illuminating the scene.

Michael, who was six years old in 1938, has two pewter mugs engraved "Old Mill Club, Treasure Hunt, 20.8.38" and "The Old Mill Club, Scavenger Hunt, 11th Nov, 1938". He can remember his parents helping to run a club for servicemen at the beginning of the war which he thinks was called the Good Companions Club. He would welcome any more information from society members.

LOWDHAM GRANGE BORSTAL

Jeremy Lodge is writing a history of the former Lowdham Grange Borstal in Nottinghamshire, which closed in 1982, and has come across references to an expedition by a group of prison officers and lads who set out to march from Feltham in Middlesex to Notts on May 4 1930.

They stopped in Dunstable on May 6 when they were hosted by Toc H and the Wesleyan Church Institute.

Jeremy has asked the history society for more information and photos, but we have been unable to help so far. Obvious place for us to look was the back files of the Dunstable Borough Gazette, which published reports on just everything that moved in those far-off days when the town was tiny and everyone knew everyone else. But we have been unable to find a single reference, even though the Gazette that month had detailed reports of all kinds of Wesleyan activities. Any other ideas?

The basis for Jeremy's book is the concern being felt at the turn of the 19th century about young petty criminals being sentenced to the harsh conditions of convict prisons along with hardened career criminals.

There were some in the prison profession who argued for a change in balance from retribution to reformation-based sentences for some young criminals. The first experiment was held in a wing of Borstal prison, Kent. The boys arrived under armed guard in chains.

HISTORIC MARCH

Thirty years later William Wigan Llewellyn led a 160-mile march of 43 Lads and eight other officers from Feltham to Lowdham to found and build the first open borstal. There were no chains, the officers were not armed and Lowdham Grange Borstal was to have no bars, fences or walls.

This historic march commenced on May 4 1930; stopping overnight at various towns and arriving at Lowdham on May 13. Although some lads were allowed home leave during the march, all arrived safely and without any untoward incident or 'absconding'.

John Buckledee



Photo of young offenders on the historic 160 mile march from Feltham to Lowdham in Nottinghamshire