



**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 24 No 2 Jun 2023



An Inn of Manners

**BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

A member of the Family History Federation

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**BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
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REMINDER

The **CLOSING DATE** for articles to be published in the
September 2023 *Journal* is **31 July 2023**.

(Articles submitted near the closing date may not
be published until the following *Journal*)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

The Surname Index for *Journals* on the BFHS website will be updated in due course.

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BEDFORDSHIRE

Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire

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

COLIN DAVISON

66 Sudeley Walk, BEDFORD

Bedfordshire MK41 8JH

England

Tel: (01234) 364956

Email: colinndavison@gmail.com

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PROGRAMME

All talks are scheduled to take place at Mark Rutherford School (see page 13 for details). Doors open at 7 pm with the talks starting at 7.30 pm.

**Annual General Meeting
followed by
19th Century Crime in Bedfordshire
Pamela Birch
Friday 9 June 2023 (note date)**



Pamela will chair the AGM and follow on with a short talk on 19th century crime in Bedfordshire.

Pamela comes from a line of Bedfordshire agricultural labourers and was born and raised in the Bedfordshire parish of Stotfold. In 2005 she gained a Masters degree in Archive Administration via University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and since 2014 she has been the county archivist in charge of managing Bedfordshire Archives.

**Research before 1837
Ian Waller
Friday 7 July 2023**



I am a retired professional genealogist with considerable experience in English research. I currently serve as the vice chairman and education officer of the Family History Federation. I am a Fellow and a former Chairman of The Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives, AGRA, the body which represents professional genealogists throughout England and Wales. I am a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and previously served as a trustee and chairman of the Society Education Committee. I have authored several books in the Society's 'My Ancestor' series including 'My Ancestor was an Agricultural Labourer'.



PROGRAMME (cont'd)

Secrets never to be told

Fiona Chesterton

Friday 8 September 2023 (Note date)



I worked for many years as a television journalist, editor, producer and commissioning editor, mainly at the BBC and Channel 4. I was born in Leicester, in the English Midlands, in the 1950s. I now live in Cambridge.

My book *'Secrets Never to be Told'* is an extraordinary story, compellingly told, which unravels a century and a half of family secrets. It reveals how being born illegitimate shaped the lives of two women – one of them, the author. Starting with a letter revealing a mystery inheritance, the author goes on a five-year quest taking her from Victorian Cambridge to modern

Vancouver. She uncovers how her cousin Jessie, born to a Bedfordshire farmer's daughter, emigrated to Canada, one of thousands of female domestic servants exported as 'surplus' women before the First World War. Woven alongside the contemporary detective investigation on the trail of one immigrant's untold story, is that of the author's strange 1960s childhood of social isolation in a Midlands city, obsessed with a world seen through TV - and with the Beatles. Her talk will show how combining digital and real world resources including Victorian and Edwardian photographs and Canadian records helped her bring her family history story to life.

Amazing Bedfordians

Paul Nicholson

Friday 6 October 2023



Paul Nicholson has a degree in fine art and a wealth of teaching experience in schools and other settings. He has worked on many community arts projects in Bedford over the years, producing more than a dozen public murals. He is a keen photographer and has been documenting the world of graffiti since 1984, becoming an expert on street art in the last ten years.

His talk about amazing Bedfordians features a number of sports stars, explorers, TV stars, an inventor and more, all of whom were born in Bedford. Not all of these people are household names but they all have amazing stories to tell.

AENEAS LIONEL ACTON MACKINTOSH (1879 - 1916)
THE POLAR HERO OF BEDFORD MODERN SCHOOL
Reproduced by permission of Trevor N Stewart
from his pamphlet of 2015

The MACKINTOSH clan are an ancient Scottish family originating from the Inverness area. Their home is Moy Hall 10 miles south of the city.

Aeneas Mackintosh's father Alexander (also known as Alistair) was a direct descendant of the Chieftains of Clan CHATTAN. Alexander died in India in 1902 and had Aeneas not himself vanished so tragically in 1916 he would undoubtedly have become the 31st Chief of the Clan.

Like so many other Scots of the time, Alexander went out to India in the second half of the nineteenth century, some records say that he was an indigo planter, others that he was actually in the Indian Civil Service. However, it was while he was there that he met and in 1878 married Annie Lavinia Jane BERKELEY, who had been born in India to English parents in 1856.



Annie Mackintosh and her six children, Aeneas, Isobel, George, Alexander, Charles (but always known as Berkeley) and Eric all arrived in Bedford, without their father, in 1891. All of the children except Eric had been born in India but he was delivered in Norwood, London in June 1890 just a few months before the family came to Bedford. Annie is pictured left with Aeneas (in black roll-neck shirt at the back), George, Alexander and Isobel, taken in India circa 1887.

It is not known why this split occurred but it seems to have been permanent because after his name appeared on the birth certificate of Eric, the father is not mentioned again in any further family records.

Why was Bedford chosen as their new home? Well almost certainly

this was because of the high quality of education being offered by the two Harpur Trust boys' schools in the town. Aeneas and his brothers all attended Bedford Modern School, then located in the town centre, variously between 1891 and 1903. Isobel was educated at home.

On arrival in Bedford the family settled first at 40, St Leonards Avenue, in St John's Parish. In 1894 they all moved to 29, Clarendon Street, but by the time of the 1901 Census, Aeneas, Alexander and George had all left home to pursue their own careers.

Aeneas left the school in the autumn of 1894 and took up a tough merchant navy apprenticeship serving on the ships Cromdale and Mount Stewart in which he advanced to Third Officer. In 1899 he was appointed junior officer on RMS Victoria of the P&O company obtaining both his First Officer and Masters Certificates while serving on this ship. By all accounts he had become a 'cultured, well spoken, debonair man with refined manners, but not afraid of hard labour'.

He remained in the service of P&O until he was given leave of absence to join Ernest SHACKLETON's Nimrod Expedition to the South Pole in 1907. Before the expedition left, Aeneas was also commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve.



The ship Nimrod sailed on 11 August 1907 with another Bedfordian, Frank WILD of Eversholt, as Second in Command. Mackintosh appears to have immediately impressed both Shackleton and his fellow officers with his strong will and determination and he was short listed for a place on the party due to march to the pole. However, shortly after his arrival at McMurdo Sound on 31 January 1908, he had a dreadful accident, which cost him his right eye.

Contemporary reports of the incident say that Aeneas was unloading sledging equipment using the on-board hoist when the loading hook swung round and hit him in the face. The injury was so serious as to necessitate the immediate removal of the eye by the expedition Doctor, Eric MARSHALL using only some improvised surgical equipment. This accident also meant that Mackintosh lost his possible place on the shore party since he was sent back to New

Zealand for further treatment and to recuperate. He did not rejoin the expedition until January 1909 and then only participated in its closing stages. Shackleton wanted him to take over as Captain of the Nimrod but the injury had not healed sufficiently for him to accept this responsibility.

On his return he was to have yet another brush with fate, for when Nimrod got stranded in the ice some 25 miles from base camp, Mackintosh and three sailors decided that they would walk across the ice to reach the huts. With the terrible weather conditions, the sea ice melting all around them and each one suffering from severe snow blindness, it was readily acknowledged by the expedition leaders that the group were indeed lucky to survive.

This good fortune would not hold out for ever !

On his return to England in June 1909 Mackintosh was discharged by P&O due to his sight problems but was later invited by Shackleton to become a member of an unsuccessful gold mining expedition to the Carpathian Mountains of Eastern Europe. He then took himself to the Cocos Islands in the South Pacific searching for lost Spanish treasure, again with no success. With no other real prospects of employment Aeneas then agreed to accompany Douglas MAWSON on a trip to Hungary but this expedition never materialised. Desperately searching for work, in 1911 Mackintosh

accepted the post of Assistant Secretary to the Merchant Navy Guild in Liverpool and moved to live in the city.

During his time in Bedford, either while at school or periods of leave at home, Aeneas had got to know Gladys CAMPBELL, the beautiful youngest daughter of the late Lt Colonel John Ronald Campbell of the Bengal Staff Corps (died 1891) and his wife Louisa Sutherland Campbell. Gladys, a talented artist, had three sisters Helen, Ada, and Grace, and two brothers Robert and Walter, and the family had lived for a number of years at The Lindens, 65, Bromham Road, now demolished.

Although his own family had by then left Bedford, on 15 February 1912, Aeneas returned from his new home at Claughton on Merseyside to marry Gladys Campbell. The ceremony took place at Holy Trinity Church, Bromham Road, not far from the home of the bride. Gladys was 23 and Aeneas 32. She was given away by her elder brother, Robert, and her witness was younger brother, Walter. The Best Man was Dr Eric Marshall the physician who had operated on the eye at McMurdo Sound and had clearly remained in touch with his former colleague. The organist was the Bridegroom's youngest brother, Eric.



There is a full report of the wedding in the *Bedfordshire Times and Standard* newspaper of 22 February 1912 under the title '*Explorer's Wedding - Bedford Officer who was with Shackleton*'. The report begins '*Such was the announcement that a famous Bedfordian, who had dared to fight the frozen south, had ventured to face the unknown perils of the matrimonial state*'. How journalistic styles have changed!

It went on to record that Mackintosh had been present at Buckingham Palace when the King had bestowed a knighthood on Shackleton and he himself had received the Polar Medal.

After a honeymoon in London the couple returned to their new home in Liverpool where he resumed his duties with the Guild.

The couple's first daughter Pamela Aileen was born at New Ferry, very close to Cloughton on 29 October 1912 but Mackintosh was experiencing real difficulty in settling down to the routine life of office work and longed for an opportunity to go exploring again. This opportunity was to present itself early in 1914 when Shackleton invited Mackintosh to join his proposed Trans Antarctic Expedition. He was subsequently appointed to be Leader of the Ross Sea Advance Party whose vital responsibility it was to lay supply depots along the expedition route, and to Captain their ship the Steam Yacht Aurora.

A third Bedfordshire man was to join him in this elite group as Henry Ernest (always known as Ernest) Wild had been persuaded to join the expedition and to become the storeman and supplies chief to the Ross Sea Party. Ernest was the younger brother of Frank Wild who had previously been to the Antarctic with both SCOTT and Shackleton and was also about to return. Both were the sons of Benjamin Wild the village schoolmaster at Eversholt and both had lived with their parents at the schoolhouse in the village.

Having been appointed to the expedition Mackintosh resigned from his post with the Guild and moved with his family back to Bedford. It is assumed that this was so that his wife could be close to her own family during the years that he might actually be away and also during her pregnancy with a second baby due in November. In the Spring of 1914 Mackintosh took a tenancy on the recently built house at 43 Beverley Crescent for them all. It was from this address at the end of August 1914 that he sadly said farewell to his family and left for London on the first part of the long journey south. Although he was truly excited at the prospect of achieving his ambition of 'just one more expedition' he was understandably distressed at having to leave his wife and young family.

On 4 September, Mackintosh left London on his own, bound for Australia to pick up the refitted ship Aurora. Two weeks later on 18 September the remaining members of the Ross Sea Party left Tilbury under the command of Second Officer Joseph Russell STENHOUSE.

Arriving in Australia during the second week of October 1914, Mackintosh was horrified to see the condition of the Aurora. The repair and strengthening works were not completed and the ship was neither water tight nor seaworthy. There was a major shortage of supplies and equipment and funding had run out, even before the expedition proper had begun. While he was in Australia preparing the Aurora, the couple's second daughter Gladys Elisabeth was born at Beverley Crescent on 25 November 1914. She was baptised at Holy Trinity Church on 15 January 1915.

Despite his ongoing concerns about the condition of the ship, Mackintosh set sail from Sydney in mid December 1914 bound for Hobart and then the final leg of the journey. It was at Hobart that Stenhouse and the final members of the crew who had left from Tilbury were to join the ship and it was hoped that the shortages of supplies would also be addressed. But sadly the latter did not happen and as the final deadline date set by Shackleton approached Mackintosh knew that it was decision time. With many reservations and the Aurora still in a state of chaos, he reluctantly set sail for Antarctica on 23 December 1914 arriving at Ross Island on 9 January 1915, three weeks later than had been intended. Mackintosh therefore decided that the depot laying would have to begin immediately and that he would personally take charge of one of the two groups. Before he set out he left precise and explicit instructions with Stenhouse, now in command of the ship, regarding his responsibility to find a safe winter berth for it. These instructions were based on Shackleton's previous experiences with Scott on the Discovery and his own aboard Nimrod. Under no circumstances was the ship to be allowed to become iced-in, this lesson above all had to be learned and, although there was only one safe winter harbouring area in McMurdo Sound, a better protected location within the Sound had to be sought. Aurora, under Stenhouse, arrived in the area on 12 March 1915 having left the 12 men of the shore party to their work.

Following exactly his instructions, Stenhouse sought a more sheltered area of the Sound and eventually after several near disasters in attempting to land, the ship settled on 12 March 1915 in an inlet not previously used but close to where Shackleton had instructed. The three anchors were set for what could be a lengthy stay and unloading of stores and supplies began, although it had always been intended that the ship would continue to be the main supply stores. By April however the Aurora had been almost wrecked by snow and ice and on 6 May what was left was ripped from its anchors and blown out to sea with no power and still attached to a large ice flow. That left a small group of scientists and the members of the depot laying party stranded ashore on the ice, not knowing what had happened to the ship and with nothing except what they carried and little hope of rescue.

The Aurora floated with its attached ice for almost nine months until it managed to break free on 12 February 1916 and drift back to New Zealand arriving there on 2 April 1916.

Completely oblivious of the drama that was unfolding on their ship, the depot laying



work continued, but at considerable personal cost. In particular, due to the lack of food and the horrendous weather conditions, the rapidly deteriorating condition of the health and welfare of a number of the members of the party was causing real concern.

Having completed their work the land party turned for home on 27 January 1916 but the appalling weather meant very slow progress. Their dogs died one by one and the men suffered severe frost bite. The lack of food forced them to resort to catching and eating seal. They still had no knowledge of the fate of the ship and were entirely dependant upon their own resourcefulness. One of Mackintosh's group, Arnold SPENCER-SMITH soon became physically helpless and had to be sledged. Mackintosh himself was no longer able to pull and could only stagger alongside until he also collapsed and had to be put on the sledge beside Spencer-Smith, as pictured above.

By 10 February they were about ten miles from their target but a further blizzard halted progress for five days. All supplies and food had now been exhausted and it was impossible for Mackintosh or Spencer-Smith to continue further.

Three men were sent on to attempt to make it to the depot and hopefully collect food and fuel to save the others. Mackintosh and Spencer-Smith were left in a tent under the care of Ernest Wild. The three finally made it to the depot and then back to the tent but another member of the group, Victor HAYWARD, had now also collapsed. On 8 March, Mackintosh volunteered to stay behind while the others tried to get Spencer-Smith and Hayward to safety and the medical treatment that they so desperately needed. Spencer-Smith sadly died the next day and the rescuing group then set off again to try to save Mackintosh. By 16 March all of the surviving members of the party had reached the base hut and Mackintosh began to show some signs of a recovery. This was only a temporary respite though as the Aurora was still missing with all of the remaining supplies. It was only the guile and resourcefulness of Ernest Wild that saved the group. Having found supplies that had been abandoned by the earlier Scott expedition and by recycling clothing and seal oil he was able to keep them alive. The recovery of the sick continued and they were all at least given the time to try to think of a way out of their truly desperate situation.

The ice was so thin as to prevent any surface movement to where it was believed that the ship was moored. As he got stronger Mackintosh became more and more frustrated and impatient and on the 8 May 1916 he told his colleagues that he intended to set out across the ice in order to get to base camp and hopefully there find the ship. Despite the objections of his colleagues, he still left with Hayward but within an hour of their departure they had totally disappeared from sight into yet another blizzard. They were never seen again! When the weather improved the others went out in search but all that they found were tracks leading to the edge of the broken ice. The two had either fallen through or had been carried out to sea on a lump of ice that had broken away. Foolhardy or hero? That debate still rages!

The remaining three men waited until 15 July when they considered that it was safe to make the trek to shore base at Cape Evans, and where they would be united with the other surviving members of the depot laying party.

The total absence of any finance meant that an early rescue attempt was impossible and finally it was only through the combined efforts of the Australian, New Zealand and British Governments, who agreed to fund a complete refit of the recovered Aurora and

to mount a rescue attempt, that the stranded group of explorers had any hope of being saved. On 17 January 1917 the ship arrived back from New Zealand and pulled alongside the pack ice near Cape Royde. It gradually worked its way along the coastline to Cape Evans where the survivors were astounded to see Shackleton approaching them. Astounded, because after all the sole reason for their hardship had been to provide the means for him to succeed in his trans-continental march. What they did not know was that with the wreck of Shackleton's own ship the *Endurance* in the ice, the proposed march could not go ahead. All of the suffering and the sacrifice of the Ross Sea Party had therefore been in vain and unnecessary. One week later the seven survivors of the original ten members of the group were rescued.

On hearing of the tragic loss of her husband, which because of communication problems, may not have been until February 1917 when the survivors reached New Zealand, Gladys gave up the home in Beverley Crescent and moved back in with her mother and her sisters at 65 Bromham Road. Mrs Campbell died in March of that year.

The unpleasant task of winding up Aeneas's affairs was passed to his sister Isobel Annie Mackintosh and probate was finally granted to her on 21 March 1917. The total value of the estate was £590 0s 10d.

In 1923 on the Isle of Wight, the widowed Gladys married Captain Joseph Russell Stenhouse, Mackintosh's Second in Command and the man who had been left in charge of the *Aurora*. They had a daughter Janet Patricia in 1924. On the outbreak of the Second World War Stenhouse rejoined the Royal Navy but was killed when his ship HMS *Sheba* was sunk in the Red Sea in September 1941.

Aeneas's youngest daughter, Gladys married Elwood BOLTON in June 1934 and they had a daughter Anne. He was killed on active service with the Royal Air Force in November 1942 and in April 1946 Gladys remarried Lt Col Reginald Hugh DOWLER.

Early in 1941, while their men folk were away at war, and in order to be closer to cousins, Gladys (Snr) and her daughters returned to the comparative safety of Bedford, to live at 48 Spenser Road. Aeneas's eldest daughter Pamela joined the WAAF at RAF Cardington and in June 1941 married John VENNING at St Paul's Church, Bedford. He was an Officer serving in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. They had one son Mark, born at Spenser Road on 6 September 1942, but tragically John Venning was killed in the 1943 landings in Sicily. There is a memorial plaque to him in St Paul's Church. While in Bedford, Pamela's sister Gladys worked at the barrage balloon factory at Cardington. Pamela never remarried and died in Wiltshire in June 2000. Gladys (Aeneas's and now Joseph's widow) returned to the Isle of Wight after the war and died there in 1972.

As for the remaining members of the two families:

The four Campbell girls all attended Bedford High School in Bromham Road but in 1919 after the death of their mother the unmarried sisters Helen, Ada and Grace accompanied by brothers Robert and Walter and the widowed Gladys and her two daughters, all left Bedford to live at Totland on the Isle of Wight, where Gladys married Stenhouse and her eldest brother and sisters were to remain for the rest of their life.

Both boys had attended Bedford School and then went straight on to officer

training at Sandhurst. Robert pursued a life time career in the East Surrey Regiment retiring with the rank of Major. He died on the Isle of Wight in 1966.

Walter joined the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment but later transferred to the Sierra Leone Regiment of the Royal West African Frontier Force. He retired with the rank of Captain and died in Norwich in 1962.

Aeneas's mother was to stay at Clarendon Street with her family until 1903 when she moved to 9 Campbell Road and then 180 Foster Hill Road. She left the area to live in Brighton, in 1910 and died at Burgess Hill, Sussex, in October 1934. Aeneas's sister Isobel Annie, who remained unmarried, lived with her mother until 1910 before becoming a nurse living in a boarding house in Brighton, where she died in 1962. His brother George became a Manager with a large export company and died while working in Bangkok in December 1927. He was unmarried. Alexander became a farmer in Rhodesia and died there in 1966. Berkeley went back to India to work for the Indian Government but died in December 1918 while visiting his brother in Rhodesia.

Eric went to Bedford Modern School, then New College School Oxford as a Chorister. He then returned to finish his schooling at Bedford School. He obtained a position as an Assistant Master at Elstow School (renamed Bedford County School) in Ampthill Road, Bedford in 1911 for one year. He married at Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex in July 1913. His bride was Marion WATSON who had lived just a few doors away from the Mackintosh family in Campbell Road, Bedford. Eric and Marion lived for a year at Walton and then moved to Brighton to be closer to his mother and his sister.

Eric appears to have followed a career as a professional musician and composer but in 1920 he invented and patented the cone system still used today in loudspeakers and was fundamental in the formation of the famous 'Celestion' speaker company. He left the business in 1925 and returned to a musical career and died in Cheltenham in July 1970.

There is a family memorial in St John's Churchyard Burgess Hill which commemorates Annie, Aeneas, George, Berkeley and daughter Isobel.

Editor's note:

When Trevor Stewart published this pamphlet in 2015 he wrote:

In April 2015 it is hoped that thanks to the kindness of the current owners, a Heritage blue plaque will be placed on the house in Beverley Crescent from where Aeneas Mackintosh said goodbye to his family in August 1914, never to see them again.

This came to pass and the plaque can be seen on 43 Beverley Crescent.

Trevor Stewart included the following acknowledgements in the pamphlet:

Special thanks to all of the undermentioned for their help in the preparation of this booklet which is, as far as practical, intended to ensure that another famous resident of the town is never again forgotten.

Mrs A Phillips, daughter of Gladys and Elwood and granddaughter of Aeneas, for the use of family photographs and for her valued guidance on the family history.

Mr Mark Venning son of Pamela and John and grandson of Aeneas.

Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.

Richard Wildman, Archivist, Bedford Modern School. Gina Worboys, Bedford School.

Emma Mackenzie, Archivist, Bedford Girls School.

Susan Edwards, Bedford Borough Council.

Kelly Tyler-Lewis author of 'The Lost Men' the harrowing story of Shackleton's Ross Sea Party published by Bloomsbury.

Stuart Antrobus for proof reading this publication.

OUR MEETINGS AT MARK RUTHERFORD SCHOOL

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 held at the school will be live streamed or made available later on the website in the members' portal, subject to approval by the speaker.

The address of the venue is Mark Rutherford School, Wentworth Drive, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 8PX.



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*. No need to worry if you are not used to writing, we are here to help. 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. If you need ideas to get you going or would like to discuss your ideas, please send an email to journal@bfhs.org.uk.

THE FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

The 'Bedford Arms' at Woburn is not the least of the eighteenth century ornaments of the town. It was called the 'George' in the old days, and it gave its name to the street on which it stands. It was a famous posting house in the coaching days and has entertained many distinguished travelers on the Chester to Holyhead Road. Among them was the Southill diarist Lord Torrington, who writes in 1789:

Passing by some pleasant woods we soon came to Woburn and the George, an inn of Manners and Method, unlike the Alehouses of Daventry and Towcester. Here we drank Tea, read and answered Letters then walked in the Park, a Scenery of Grandieur.

Part of the house from the back is shown in the sketch and not far away are the big stables where there was accommodation for over 50 pairs of horses.

This illustration and text are taken from 'Our Heritage: A Bedfordshire Sketch Book' drawings by G Alan Fortescue FRIBA, notes by 'Touchstone', published 1943. □

THE FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION AS IT IS TODAY

Paul Woodcraft



Much has changed since the sketch which is circa 1943. The name is now 'The Woburn' and the old building has been built round completely.

It was difficult to get a photo which shows the sketch.

In the left photo, I have marked with a blue arrow the porch which is in the centre of the sketch. As you can see the big tall chimney has gone.

In the right photo, standing back, you can see the new build in front of the sketch.

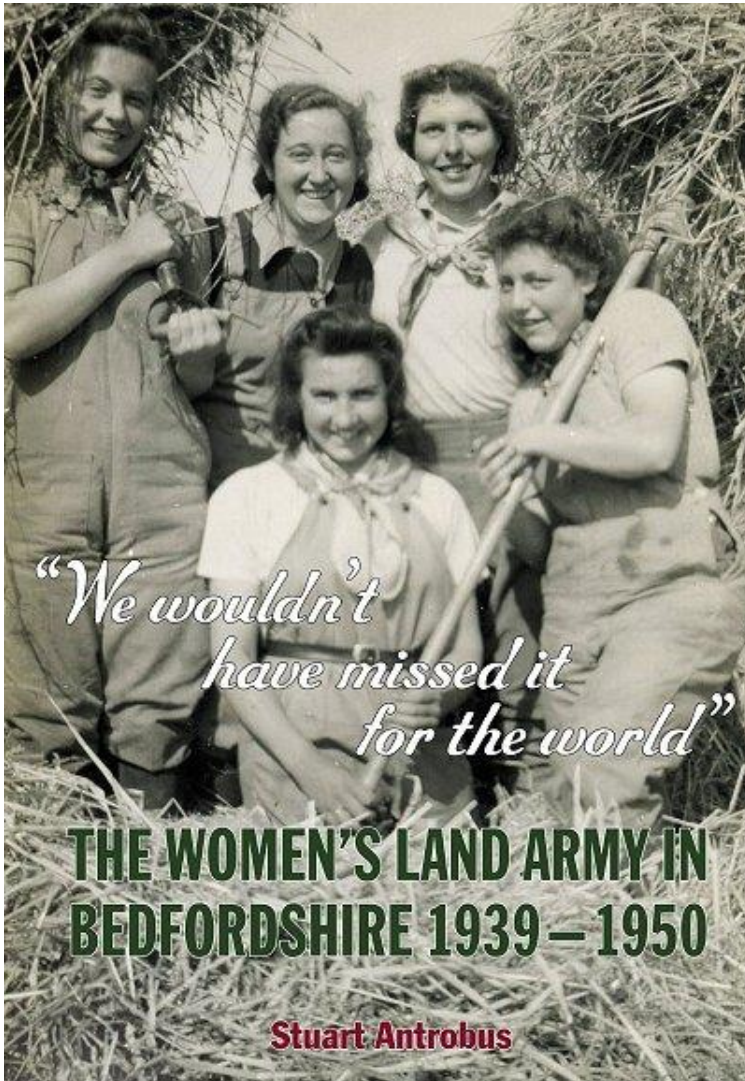
What a beautiful area of Bedfordshire right in the heart of Woburn. □



BEDFORDSHIRE LAND GIRL NAMES FOR 1939 – 1950

Stuart Antrobus

Stuart Antrobus has recently been awarded the 2023 British Association for Local History's 'Outstanding Individual Contribution to Local History' certificate, for his extensive, outstanding and significant 20-year voluntary work in researching, publishing and educating about the Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire. He is a retired social history lecturer, author of 'Life in Bedford during the Second World War' (2021) and a BFHS member.¹



Have you ever wondered if one of your female relatives served in the Women's Land Army (WLA) in Bedfordshire during the Second World War? I researched the WLA in the county, part-time, over a five-year period (2002-2007), using both documentary and oral history research. Prior to publishing my detailed illustrated history of the subject *'We wouldn't have missed it for the world' the Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire, 1939-1950* (cover pictured left), I thought how useful it would be if I could add a list of all the young women who served in Bedfordshire as Land Girls. Unfortunately, there was no such list in existence, nor for any other county.

So I decided to set out to create such a list, using what official sources were still in existence, namely the index cards to the WLA organisation nationally, kept in alphabetical order of surname. They had been lodged with the Imperial War Museum

(IWM) in the 1950s, then photographed later and made available on microfilm at the The National Archives in Kew. Faced with the prospect of having to look at a microform reader screen for months on end, going through an estimated 200,000 cards (to say nothing of the cost of having to travel to and from Kew), it was clearly out of the question. What I did, after initial explorations of the original cards held in a warehouse at IWM Duxford, Cambridgeshire, was to get together a small team of part-time volunteers who were prepared to travel there with me each week, in pairs, for regular research sessions over nine months from March 2007. We searched

¹ See also BFHS Journal Vol 17, No 6, June 2010 pp 29-33 and Vol 17, No 7, pp 12-17 for Stuart's article (in two parts) on *'The Joys of Getting Sidetracked in Research'*.

systematically through 158 boxes of small index cards, looking for any person who had been either recruited in Bedfordshire for service here or recruited elsewhere in England and transferred to serve in Bedfordshire. This was only possible through having been granted special permission to handle the original primary sources.

It was a labour of love and involved careful scrutiny of each card and making a transcription of (or, later, photocopying) relevant cards and the eventual construction of an A to Z list of maiden names, together with the limited personal and WLA service details contained on the cards. The basic list of names enabled me to add what I called a 'Roll Call of Bedfordshire Land Girls' at the end of my book, published by Book Castle Publishing in October 2008. I then spent from 2008 to 2009, with the help of a further small group of volunteers (including BFHS member Penny STANBRIDGE) in Bedford Central Library, gradually creating a complete digital database in stages, using Microsoft 'Access' software.

This full database of information enabled me to create online a more detailed 'Roll Call' section of individual web pages for each Land Girl, within a much larger website on the history of Bedfordshire WLA, created with the technical aid of Nicola AVERY, Principal Librarian, Local Studies (over several years from 2006 onwards), courtesy of Bedfordshire Libraries 'Virtual Library' Local History section. The 'Bedfordshire Women's Land Army' website was built from articles and chapters I had written on Bedfordshire WW2 agriculture, the WLA county organisation and personal memoirs of individual Land Girls who worked in either War Agricultural Committee mobile gangs, based in hostels, or privately-employed Land Girls who worked on single farms. Most of them were in their late teens when recruited to replace those men who had been conscripted during the war, in stages, from farms and market gardens into the armed forces. Although given distinctive uniforms to indicate their Home Front wartime role, these young women were not employed by the Government (and not in any way military) but were organised by the WLA, which was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The value of the website for family historians (just Google 'Bedfordshire Women's Land Army' for access to my website) is that it contains information on around 3300 women who served in Bedfordshire between 1939 and 1950, when the organisation finally ceased. I decided to create individual webpages for each woman, giving (in almost all cases) their date of birth, place at enrolment, previous employment, date of enrolment and when they left the WLA (but not the farms or employers' names, unless provided later to me by former Land Girls) and sometimes the reason for leaving the organisation. They served for varying periods of service, although most were signed up for the duration of the war.

In addition, through various reminiscence sessions I held with former Land Girls and oral history recordings I made with many individuals (18 of these are held by Bedfordshire Archives and the Imperial War Museum in London), I was able to gather together a personal collection of WLA documentary material, photographs and artefacts which enhanced my knowledge of the organisation and individual experiences. Wherever possible I have added photographs of individual Land Girls or groups, annotated with names, to the web pages, and also made links from one person's page to others with whom they served and information on hostels where they were accommodated, where known.

One of the most satisfying aspects of creating the website has been the feedback from



those who were doing family history research and had suddenly come across information on their mother, grandmother, aunty and so on, some saying that I had enabled them, for the first time, to see a photo of their relative. They were then also able to give me further information or, occasionally, corrections to information which was on the website.

Do take a look at the website² (shown left) and see what it has to offer, not only in terms of individual 'names', but also the background social history of this distinctive women's wartime organisation (civilian, despite the misleading term 'Army'!) and the contribution they made to feeding the nation during the Second World War and immediately afterwards. I hope you are able to find someone related to you.

For those without access to the internet, I have donated a bound *Bedfordshire Land Girls List, 1939-1950* reference copy to the Bedfordshire Heritage Library (open on Tuesdays) at Bedford Central Library. There are lending copies of *We wouldn't have missed it for the world* (2008) in all Bedfordshire local libraries. □

Introduction

- [Bedfordshire Women's Land Army during and after the Second World War](#)
- [Women's Land Army During the First World War](#)

Organisation

- [Bedfordshire Hostels 1942-1950](#)
- [Wartime Farming and Bedfordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee](#)

People

- [Roll Call of Bedfordshire Land Girls](#)
- [Oral Reminiscences](#)
- [Bedfordshire Land Girl Memoirs](#)

Events

- [Bedfordshire WLA Timelines](#)
- [Veteran Reunions](#)
- [Royal Visits](#)
- [Women's Land Army Tribute Memorial, 2014](#)

Research, Sources and Acknowledgements

- [Book "We wouldn't have missed it for the world" by Stuart Antrobus](#)
- [More Land Girl Photographs - part of the Ampthill Images website](#)
- [Further Reading on the Women's Land Army](#)
- [Land Army Song "Back to the Land"](#)
- [Land Girl Poetry](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)

² virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.wla/wla_bedfordshire_womens_land_army.htm

WOMEN'S ROLE IN WORLD WAR 2 IN LUTON

My Mum was almost killed by a V2

Mick Wright

Following the excellent presentation given by Thomas Lerner on *Luton During WW2*, I have been inspired to write an article specifically on the role of women in World War 2, not least because my mother, nee Irene ANDERSON, was so heavily involved in the war effort.

It is truism that anyone setting out to write their family history should talk to their

surviving relatives as a fundamental first step. When I first started out on the family history trail, most of my mother and father's brothers and sisters were still alive. A full forty years later this is sadly no longer the case. My mother told me all of her war time experiences before she developed vascular dementia. Some of the things she told me surprised me – not least the fact that unmarried women were conscripted into war service almost from the outset of WW2.

The Government had undertaken the 1939 Register to establish the professions and skills of the adult populace. Since its public release this has proved to be a very valuable tool for family historians, including me.

My mother told me that she was informed she was to be conscripted into war service. She was at that time 20 years old. She was asked to choose which service she went into and her father, decided that, given her age, she should go into factory work. She was sent to the engineering training site in Letchworth, and she had to pedal on her bike from Luton to Letchworth and home again every day. She proved to be very adept at working on machines, and was trained as a capstan lathe miller – a position she would never have had but for the War.

When she finished her training, she was assigned to the AC Delco (The Sphinx) factory in Dunstable, making sparking plugs. My mum married my dad, Derrick WRIGHT, always known as 'Bob', in 1942, but carried on her machinist occupation. Unbeknown to me, she transferred to Commer Cars, so they could at least be together some of the time at work and going home from work. My dad was working as a foreman fitter, producing the military version of the Superpoise truck – the Q4 'General Service' 3-tonner – so he was in a protected occupation as he was engaged in producing strategic military equipment.

The fateful day came at 10.30 am on 6 November 1944, when the first V2 bomb to hit Britain landed on the Commer-Karrier dispatch department. 19 people were killed and 196 were injured. The dead and injured could have been much higher. Had it fallen five minutes later the newly built canteen would have been full of workers taking their midmorning break. A number of civilians were killed as about half the houses on the north side of Curzon Road were destroyed by the bomb.

My mum always thought she had a lucky escape that day in November 1944 – she would have been going to the canteen for her break at 10.45 am. They both survived the War and had me in 1949....

I am aware that attitudes towards women working had changed significantly in the 21 years between the end WW1 and the start of WW2. It was controversial when men were conscripted in 1916. People would have found it unimaginable that women would be conscripted not long after the outbreak of hostilities in WW2 in early 1941. It became compulsory for all women aged between 18 and 60 to register for war work. Unmarried 'mobile' women between the ages of 20 and 30 were called up and given a choice of joining the services or working in industry. By 1944 a third of the civilian population were engaged in war work, including over 7,000,000 women. □



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- P.G. Dip. in Archive Management

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

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

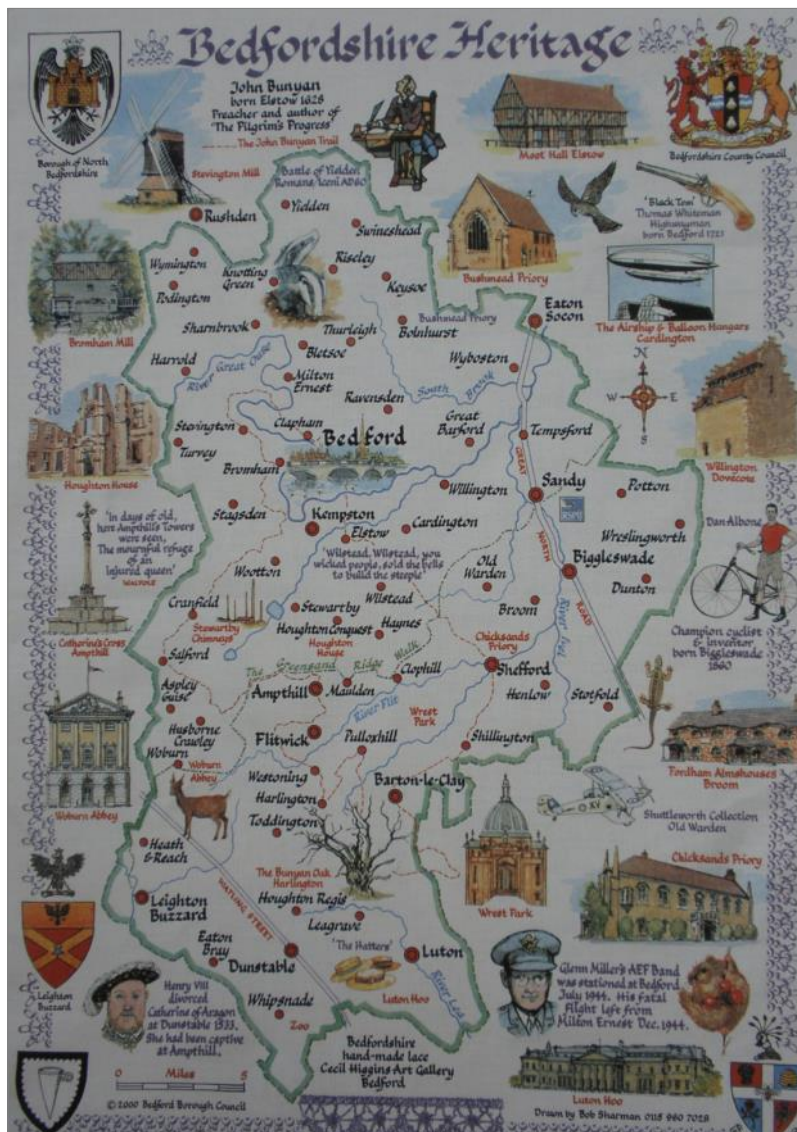
These tea towels are really too nice to use for drying up; they are beautifully colour printed with some famous Bedfordshire landmarks forming a border for the County map. Even if you do not have any Bedfordshire ancestors they make ideal gifts.

They are 100% cotton and at £4.50 each can be obtained from the bookstall at members' meetings, by email to Lynn Manning at:

secretary@bfhs.org.uk,

or by post to Lynn at:

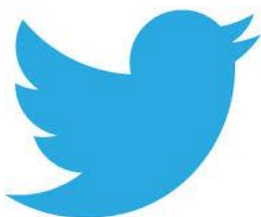
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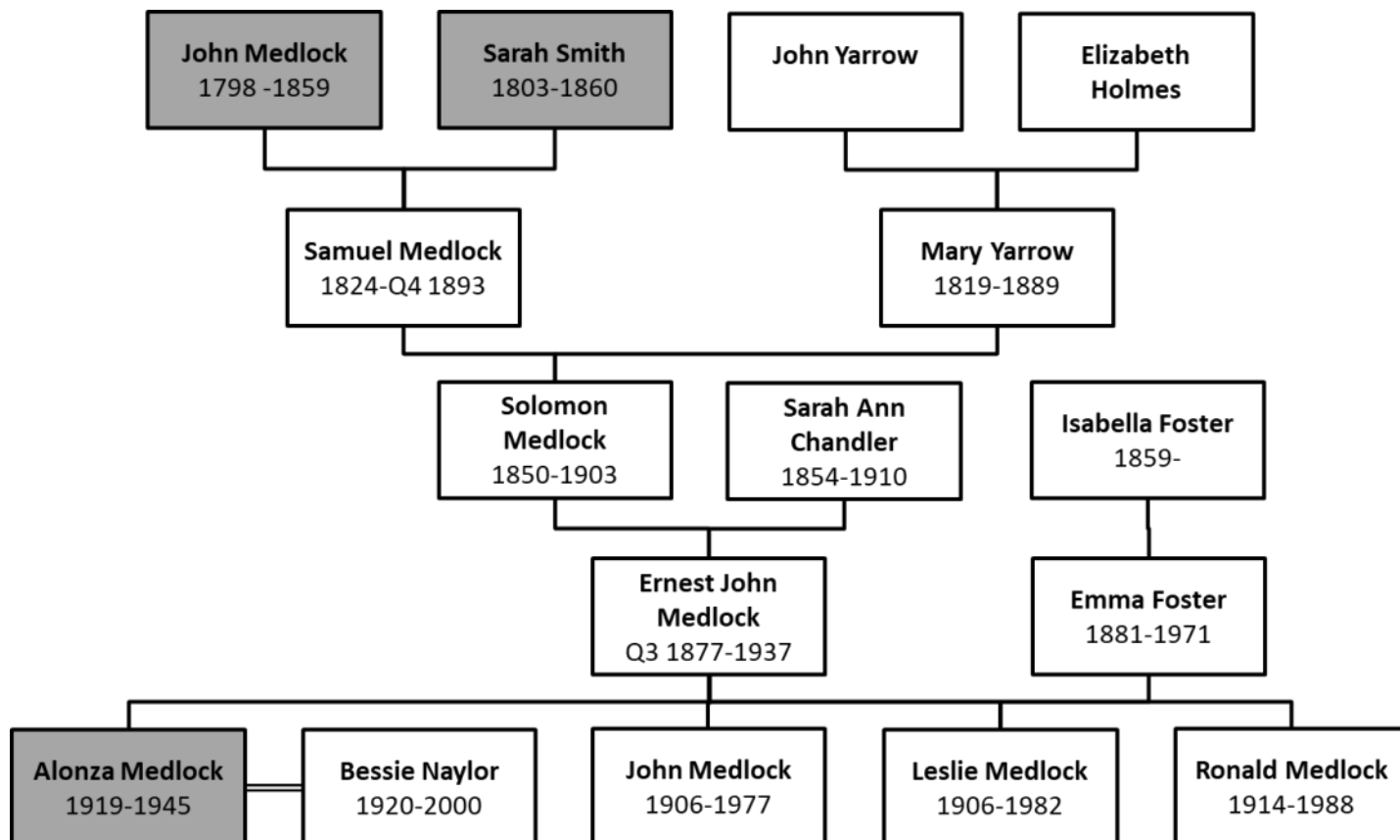


RESEARCHING SOME BRAVE ANCESTORS PART 2

Graham Webster

Part 1 of this article by Graham, relating the family history of the MEDLOCK family members who would see active service in World War 1, was published in the March 2023 Journal. For the sake of continuity, the footnotes to Part 2 continue on from Part 1.

Come the next generation, Alonza Medlock lived in and around Dewsbury.⁵⁷ He was born in Dewsbury on 8 February 1919, the fourth son of Ernest John Medlock and Emma FOSTER. His grandfather Solomon, born November 1850 in Wrestlingworth, had married Sarah Ann CHANDLER in Eyeworth, Bedfordshire in 1874.



Ernest John Medlock was Solomon's second son, born 1877 in Lawns, Outwood, Wakefield. Solomon's father, Samuel (a stone digger), with the rest of his family appears in the 1871 Census in Wrestlingworth, but by the 1881 Census they are in Stanley cum Wrenthorpe, outside Wakefield, Yorkshire. There is nothing in the records to suggest why the family had moved other than Samuel had been prosecuted in early 1868 for poaching and spent three months hard labour for it. Ernest's brother (James William) was born in Lawns in 1875 narrowing the date of the move to between 1871 and 1875. In Yorkshire, the Medlock family expanded quickly; James and Ernest had eight siblings, but there were another 38 cousins born around Wakefield and Dewsbury!

⁵⁷ Details of Alonza's family largely taken from sources on [Ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) and [Findmypast.co.uk](https://www.findmypast.co.uk).

Ernest Medlock married Emma Foster in St Mary Magdalene, Outwood, Yorkshire on 10 June 1905. By 1911 they were living in 10 Morton Street, Thornhill Lees, Yorkshire, with sons John and Leslie; another son, Ronald, was born in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, where Alonza was born on 8 February 1919. Alonza married Bessie NAYLOR in August 1939 in Dewsbury and later in the year they were living in 44 Thornhill Terrace, Brewery Lane, Dewsbury, and he was an apprentice plumber. They then moved to 3 Kimberley Street, Thornhill, Dewsbury, Yorks. In 1941 he was a gunner in 155th (The Lanarkshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery and was in Malaya, arriving on 3 September 1941 having left the Firth of Clyde in March 1941,⁵⁸ and soon found themselves in the north west of the country in the middle of dense rubber plantations.⁵⁹

Alonza's regiment faced intensive fighting from October 1941 to January 1942 as Allied Forces were gradually forced down the Malayan Peninsula by the invading Japanese. By February 1942 the 155th were on Singapore Island holding a defensive position on the Woodlands Estate, east of the causeway from the mainland. Once the Japanese advance overcame this causeway, they were ordered by their command on 15 February to surrender. This was after atrocities were committed by the Japanese in their advance on to Singapore Island:

...Japanese infantry were spotted approaching the [Alexandra] hospital, which still held more than 200 patients and staff. A British officer, holding a white flag, went out to meet them and was immediately bayoneted to death. The Japanese then rushed the hospital...A patient undergoing surgery was bayoneted while under anaesthetic on the operating theatre...Within thirty minutes of the murderous attack, at least 50 patients and staff had been killed and during the afternoon a further 200 were removed and later murdered.⁶⁰

The captured men from the 155th were moved to the Changi prisoner of war (POW) camp. Treatment of POWs by the Japanese and the movement of the men of the 155th to Kinkaseki PoW camp on the island of Taiwan and a three year ordeal as slaves in the largest copper mine in the Japanese Empire are well documented.⁶¹⁻⁶⁵ In early March

⁵⁸ *Death was our bedmate: 155th (Lanarkshire Field Regiment and the Japanese 1941-1945* Agnes McEWAN and Campbell THOMPSON , Pen and Sword, 2013.

⁵⁹ Roll of Honour, Britain at war: Lanarkshire Yeomanry 155th Field Regiment RA, roll-of-honour.org.uk/regiments/Lanarkshire_Yeomanry/html/history.htm.

⁶⁰ *Death was our bedmate* *ibid*.

⁶¹ *Death was our bedmate* *ibid*.

⁶² The Story of Changi cofepow.org.uk/armed-forces-stories-list/the-story-of-changi.

⁶³ Changi POW camp historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/prisoners-of-war-in-ww2/changi-pow-camp/

⁶⁴ Never forgotten: the story of the Taiwan POW Camps and the men interned in them: Kinkaseki Camp, powtaiwan.org/The%20Camps/camps_detail.php?Kinkaseki-Camp-1-1&name=Kinkaseki.

⁶⁵ Never forgotten: the story of the Taiwan POW Camps and the men interned in them: Taihoku #6 Camp, powtaiwan.org/The%20Camps/camps_detail.php?Taihoku-Camp-6-6&name=Taihoku.

1945 the Kinkaseki mine was closed because the ore could not get out to Japan for processing as the allied navies were sinking all of the Japanese convoys. It was decided then to move the men to a camp further inland and one was set up in the mountains south of Taihoku (Taipei).

Alonza is recorded⁶⁶ as being incarcerated in both Kinkaseki and Taihoku 6 but no details exist of when the move was made. Although there were times when no medical assistance was available in either camp, medical records in the National Archive show that Alonza received medical attention from 23 July 1945. They then record that he died on 30 July 1945:

*Death: Ascaris and beri-beri*⁶⁷

*...acute melancholia, anorexia - constantly refused food from admission. All systems normal. Final debility with cardiac failure. Died 1200 hours.*⁶⁸

It was few days later that:



On 1 August 1944, POW camp commanders were issued with a copy of the 'Final Disposition' - the organised killing of all POWs in the event of the invasion of Japanese territories of the possible rescue of the POWs by Allied Forces.

*In preparation for the Final Disposition, 150 men were sent from Taihoku 6 in July 1945 to build a new camp in the hills north of the city [Taipei]. It was intended that all of the POWs from Taihoku 6 would be moved there and killed in the event of the Allies invading Taiwan. Conditions at Oka, the new camp, were bad. Food was scarce, the treatment brutal and more men died.*⁶⁹

Records show that Alonza was buried at Daichoku⁷⁰ – ‘...[most] of those who died there were [r]e-buried at Sai Wan, Hong Kong...’⁷¹

The headstone of Gunner Alonza Medlock is shown left and includes the dedication:

⁶⁶ Never forgotten. The story of the Taiwan POW Camps and the men who were interned in them. Honour Roll. powtaiwan.org/The%20Men/men_honour.php?page=27

⁶⁷ Ancestry.co.uk.

⁶⁸ The National Archive, Kew reference SS/330/141/472.

⁶⁹ Death was our bedmate *ibid*.

⁷⁰ The location of Taihoku prisoner-of-war camp POW Camps outside Japan Proper, powresearch.jp/en/archive/camplist/outside_index.html.

⁷¹ World War Two / Re: 35 LTAA Regt RA, rootschat.com/forum/index.php?action=profile;area=showposts;sa=messages;u=258853.

BELOVED HUSBAND OF BESSIE, DEAR DAD OF ALAN, SON OF ERNEST & EMMA MEDLOCK R.I.P.⁷²

In 1945 Bessie Medlock was living at 25 Nursery Street, Thornhill, Dewsbury, Yorkshire and a few years later at 10 Rydal Place, Liversedge, Yorkshire after remarrying. It is believed she died in 2000 in Huddersfield, Yorkshire; Alan, born in 1940, continued to live in Yorkshire.

Yes, these cousins were ‘mere twiglets’ on the family tree but exploring their history exposed histories otherwise unseen. Without following through on these little-known backgrounds there is not the recognition to the bravery of these men and others like them. It also highlights the tragedies and heroics of an extended family once rooted in a small community but through social change spread across the country – and probably replicated with other families and other communities. □

⁷² Gunner Alonza Medlock cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2221307/alonza-medlock/

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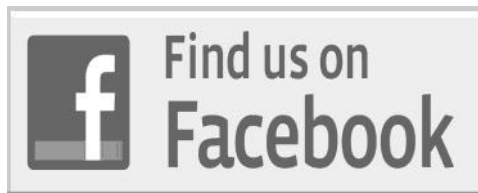
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The available downloads include all 128 Bedfordshire Parish Registers, Bedfordshire Nonconformist Registers, Marriage Licences, Poor Law papers, BFHS back Journals Vol 1-19 with an index to surnames and subjects, and the four Bedfordshire Will books. BFHS Journals volumes 20-23 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**.

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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).

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Parish	Price	Issue	Parish	Price	Issue
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Your committee is continually looking for ways to improve what is offered to members and following the useful responses from the recent Members' Questionnaire, we thought how could we keep the ideas coming.

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.

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: bfhs.org.uk Email: bfhs@bfhs.org.uk Web Sales: parishchest.com genfair.co.uk
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The following email addresses are also available:

chairman@bfhs.org.uk secretary@bfhs.org.uk treasurer@bfhs.org.uk journal@bfhs.org.uk librarian@bfhs.org.uk membership@bfhs.org.uk progsec@bfhs.org.uk bookstall@bfhs.org.uk publicity@bfhs.org.uk research@bfhs.org.uk searches@bfhs.org.uk gdpr@bfhs.org.uk social@bfhs.org.uk webmaster@bfhs.org.uk distribution@bfhs.org.uk surname.interests@bfhs.org.uk	Society Chairman & Information Manager Society Secretary Society Treasurer Journal Co-ordinator Society Librarian Membership Secretary Programme Secretary All BFHS Publications Sales Enquiries (CDs, Books) Publicity Officer Research Co-ordinator Search Co-ordinator Information Manager Social Events Organiser Society Webmaster Journal Distribution Surname Interests
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