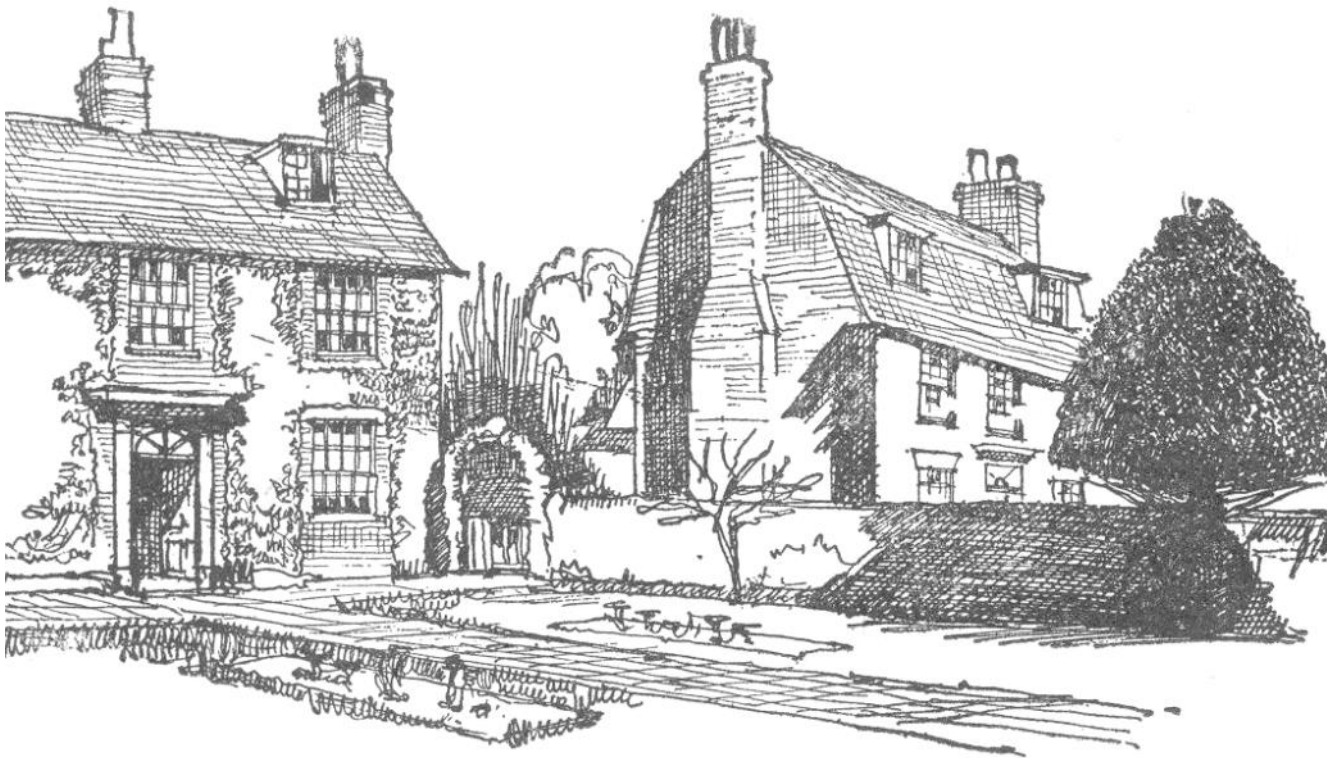


**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 23 No 6 Jun 2022



Georgian Houses in Apsley Guise

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**BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
JOURNAL**



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CRANFIELD CRIMINALS 1840 - 1860 PT 1

Mark Tresidder

This article is taken from a project I undertook as part of my studies towards an MSc in Palaeographic, Heraldic and Genealogical studies with Strathclyde University in 2013. Part 2 will follow in the September *Journal*, but this is only part of the work undertaken and further articles may follow in later Journals.

The project investigated the genealogical background of criminals from Cranfield in the period 1840 to 1860. It sought to understand:

- the legal system in place at the time;
- what courts were involved in trying those accused of the crimes and their locations;
- what types of crime were being committed and by whom;
- what were the occupations of those committing crime, their ages, genders and marital statuses;
- what individuals or families were involved in crime and whether there were any serial offenders.

Research was carried out in the records held by Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Services (BLARS) now the Bedfordshire Archive Service, both online with its gaol database and catalogues of Quarter Sessions¹ records and with Petty Sessions² minute books held at the record office. The court and gaol records have been supplemented with newspaper reports from the *Findmypast* collections, census records and parish records to build up the backgrounds of those appearing in court.

The results of the investigation identified almost four hundred criminal offences during the period under investigation. The majority were committed, as expected by the village's labourers, committing offences such as assault, theft, non-payment of rates and offences against game laws. But the shopkeepers and publicans were also prone to break the law, committing offences such as having unjust weights and measures and offences against licencing laws. Analysis of the offenders' backgrounds highlighted that at least forty percent of the crimes recorded were identified to have been committed by 17 families within the village.

Whilst investigation was centred on criminals resident in Cranfield or crimes committed in Cranfield, search in online newspapers revealed offences occurring in other areas, especially across the boarder from Bedfordshire into Buckinghamshire at Newport Pagnell, and one as far away as Lincolnshire. What follows are some of the case studies for individuals and families.

Joel LACK

This case study shows the range of records available for criminal research as a case progresses through the courts from petty sessions, through to quarter sessions and gaol records following conviction.

¹ Justices of the Peace held trials four times a years at Quarter Sessions usually in the County town. They heard more serious offences and were tried with a jury present.

² Court that commenced in early nineteenth century to deal with administrative affairs of Quarter Sessions. Also tried minor offences summarily.

The Census³ of 1841 shows Joel Lack was born in Cranfield, Bedfordshire, in 1832, the son of Thomas an agricultural labourer and his wife Salomy. He was the sixth of ten children born to Thomas and Salome (as her name is spelt in Parish Registers). His siblings were:

Ann bp 11 September 1825 at Cranfield.⁴
 Thomas, bp 23 December 1827 at Cranfield.
 John, bp 15 May 1831 at Cranfield.
 Mary Alice, bp 25 May 1834 at Cranfield.
 Joseph, bp 25 May 1834 at Cranfield.
 Soloman, bp 16 January 1848 at Cranfield.
 Edward, bp 16 January 1848 at Cranfield.
 James, bp 16 January 1848 at Cranfield.
 Mary, bp 16 January 1848 at Cranfield.
 No baptismal record was found for Joel.

In 1841 the family are found living at Cranfield with the following children found at home with their parents: Ann (b between 1822 and 1826), Thomas (b 1827), John (b 1830), Joseph (b 1832), Joel (b 1834), Mary (b 1835), James (b 1837), Edward (b 1839).

Ten years later the family are recorded in the 1851 Census living in the East part of Cranfield. Thomas is recorded as a widower, aged 58, an agricultural labourer. Living with him in his household are Mary aged 16, Joel aged 15, an agricultural labourer, and Soloman aged 5.

Shortly after the 1851 Census was taken we find a reference for Joel in the Petty Sessions Minute Book for Ampthill. The entry simply records that on the 7 June 1851,

No. of Case.	Name of Complainant or Prosecutor.	Name of Defendant or Prisoner.	Nature of Offence.	In what Parish Committed.	Whether Defendant appeared at hearing.	Day of Proceeding.	Decision of Magistrates.	Status of Magistrate.	Penalty.	Damage.
	<i>James G. Gardner</i>	<i>William Wain</i>	<i>Hill Farm</i>	<i>Hill Farm</i>	-	-	<i>Infected person put in C.M.</i>			
	<i>James G. Gardner</i>	<i>John Bullington</i>	<i>Swing Lane</i>	<i>Ampthill</i>	-	<i>June 5</i>	<i>Infected person put in C.M.</i>			
	<i>Elizabeth Gullet</i>	<i>George Rankine</i>	<i>Railway</i>	<i>Wrought Camp</i>	-	-	<i>Infected person put in C.M.</i>			
	<i>Ann Palmer</i>	<i>George Stapleton</i>	<i>Railway</i>	<i>Ampthill</i>	-	-	<i>Infected person put in C.M.</i>			
	<i>Thomas Lovell</i>	<i>Joel Lack</i>	<i>Felony</i>	<i>Cranfield</i>	<i>In custody June 7</i>		<i>Committed for trial 9/6/51</i>			

a case of felony⁵ in Cranfield was brought by Thomas LOVELL against Joel Lack and heard by George Gardener HARTER.⁶ Joel was in custody at the time of the hearing and was committed for trial.

³ All Census records are from *Findmypast*, **Findmypast.co.uk**, and *Ancestry*, **Ancestry.co.uk**, transcriptions unless otherwise stated.

⁴ All baptismal, marriage and burial records are from Bedfordshire Family History Society, **BFHS.org.uk**, transcriptions of Bedfordshire Parish Registers unless otherwise stated.

⁵ A serious offence. Before 1870 a person convicted of a felony was liable to forfeit all lands and chattel. They were also likely to be sentenced to the death penalty.

⁶ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1850-1854). Lack, Joel. PSA1/3, p 30. BLARS, Bedford.

Following committal at the Petty Sessions court, recognizances are entered into requiring the persons named to appear at Quarter Sessions to prosecute and give evidence against Joel. The Quarter Sessions records reveal recognizances for Thomas Lovell, a baker of Cranfield, to prosecute Joel Lack accused of stealing 5 cakes.⁷ A surety of £20 is recorded to be paid if Thomas fails to appear. A further recognizance is raised for Charles FLINT, PC, to give evidence against Joel with a surety of £10.⁸ Depositions or witness statements are also recorded on the 7 June. In these Thomas Lovell and Charles Flint give evidence under oath to the magistrate George Gardener Harter against Joel Lack who is accused of stealing five rolls from Thomas to the value of four pence.⁹

Thomas Lovell states:

I am a Baker living in the Parish of Cranfield. Yesterday between eleven and twelve o'clock, my cart was standing in my yard, loaded with bread. I had saw 14 rolls placed in the cart by my man Ian BRINLEY; shortly after, the Police Constable came to me, and asked if I had lost anything from my cart. I examined the cart, and found that five out of the 15 rolls were gone. The police Constable then showed me five rolls which I knew to be my property, and which had been placed in the cart.

Charles Flint Police Constable states:

Yesterday the sixth day of June I was going up the village of Cranfield, I saw the prisoner coming down the village, he appeared to me to have something under his smock. When he got to his own yard, seeing me, he ran down the yard into the house. I ran after him and followed him into the house, where I found three rolls on the table, one in his hand, and one in his pocket. I asked him where he got them from. He replied, I found them in Mr Lovell's yard. I told him that I was puted that he has stolen them from Mr Lovell's, and that I should take him into custody. I did so and took him to Mr Lovell's and I showed him the bread which he at once identified as being stolen from his cart.

Joel Lack in his statement says:

I went down Mr Lovell's yards to purchase a penny cake. I saw one roll, which I took. I saw another and took that and then I took the other three.

The next Quarter Sessions record found in this case is the Return of persons committed, bailed to appear for trial or indicted at the Midsummer Quarter Sessions 1851. In this document we learn that Joel was sentenced to 6 weeks imprisonment for larceny.¹⁰

⁷ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 7 June 1851. Lack, Joel. Recognizances. QSR1851/3/4/27a.

⁸ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 7 June 1851. Lack, Joel. Recognizances. QSR1851/3/4/27b.

⁹ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 7 June 1851. Lack, Joel. Recognizances. QSR1851/3/5/27.

¹⁰ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 7 June 1851. Lack, Joel. Return of prisoners. QSR1851/3/3/4.

The last of the Quarter Sessions records is the juror's presentment which records that Joel gave a plea of not guilty and records the jury's verdict of guilty.¹¹

Finally the gaol database available on the BLARS website¹² reveals the following information about Joel.

He is 15 years of age, 5ft 3ins in height with brown hair, grey eyes and a swarthy complexion and a round visage. He has a scar on the second finger of the left hand as an identifying feature. The database identifies Joel as being single, and as being born and resident in Cranfield. It also records that he was committed to Bedford, New House of Correction by Rev G G Harter on 7 June 1851. His trial at County Sessions took place on 2 July 1851 where he was sentenced to 6 weeks hard labour. He was discharged at the end of his sentence on 11 August 1851.

The final source for Joel in this case is found in newspaper reports of court cases. The *Cambridge Independent Press* simply reports on 5 July 1851:

*Joel Lack. Stealing cakes at Cranfield; six weeks' imprisonment.*¹³

Habitual Criminals

Habitual criminals are those who have been convicted of a crime and against whom a previous conviction can be proved. Here we follow the criminal careers of John BLUNT and Joseph DUNKLEY who can be shown to have been convicted of multiple crimes.

John Blunt

BLARS gaol database records suggest that John Blunt was born in Lidlington about 1802.¹⁴ Parish records show 2 baptisms for a John both with parents of John and Rebecca. The first occurs on 25 July 1802, but this child probably died young as John and Rebecca have a second son baptised with the name John on 3 June 1804.

The Parish Registers at Lidlington record the following siblings for John.

Cath, bp 16 April 1797.
Sarah, bp 21 July 1799.
William, bp 4 May 1800.
Eliza, bp. 11 April 1808.

The 1841 Census records an entry for John Blunt, an agricultural labourer, aged 25 living in the household of William FOUNTAIN, a drover at Cranfield.

¹¹ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 7 June 1851. Lack, Joel. Return of prisoners. QSR1851/3/6/27.

¹² Gaol Records. England, Bedfordshire. 1851. Lack, Joel. BLARS QGV10/3. Record Id: 10061.

¹³ Cambridge Independent Press. (1851). Bedfordshire, Wednesday The Cambridge Independent Press and Huntingdon, Bedford and Peterborough Gazette. 5 July. p 4d. All newspaper citations are from findmypast.co.uk/search/newspapers unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴ Gaol Records. England, Bedfordshire. 1843. Blunt, John. BLARS QGV11/2. Record Id: 14958.

On 26 March 1842 the *Northampton Mercury* reports on a case of lamb stealing by John Blunt and David SOULSBURY at Cranfield.¹⁵ The report gives details of the witness statements made by John SAUNDERS, of Cranfield, James BATES, superintendent of police, and Joseph FAULKNER, beer-shop keeper of Cranfield.

John Saunders is reported as saying:

On Friday morning last I missed a lamb; the ewe was running about much distressed at her loss, and I could not keep her away from the gate. I saw the lamb on the previous evening. I found some foot-marks in the clay ground near the gate on each side. I accompanied the policeman again with the prisoner Blunt's shoes to the spot, and patterned them with the prints; one nail was out of the shoe and the print in the clay correspond. I went afterwards to Soulsbury's house and searched it. In a muck-hole I found a lamb's skin. My lamb had been lame and I pared the feet; these marks are in the feet attached to the skin we found there. About 30 yards off we found some pieces of lamb in a pond; the leg part fitted the skin.

James Bates' evidence is recorded as:

I went with the prosecutor to search. I took Blunt's shoes and compared them with the prints. They corresponded exactly. We found the skin and meat as just described.

Joseph Faulkner is recorded as confirming that the prisoners had left his house together on the night of the offence. In his defence Blunt said that he frequently walked across the fields and that explained the prints. Soulsbury said that no meat was found on his ground. The paper reports that Blunt was acquitted and that Soulsbury was sentenced to twelve months hard labour.

A year later John is found appearing before the magistrates at Ampthill Petty Sessions court, charged with contravening the game laws.¹⁶ He is found guilty and sentenced to 2 months imprisonment in the House of Correction or a £2 fine. Being unable to pay the fine he is committed. BLARS gaol database provides the following information for John from the prison registers:¹⁷

John is recorded as being a labourer, 30 years of age, born in Lidlington, but residing in Cranfield, Bedfordshire. He is 5ft 5ins tall with dark brown hair, grey eyes and a sallow complexion. He is stout and has lost the middle finger on the left hand. John is put to work in the mill at the house of correction and is discharged on 15 April with an orderly conduct.

The *Cambridge Independent Press* reports that he was:

*Fined the full penalty of £2 and 11s costs, and in default of payment was committed for two months and hard labour, for trespassing, in the company of others not in custody, in search of game on land in the occupation of Mr MEAD of Cranfield.*¹⁸

¹⁵ *Northampton Mercury*. (1842) Bedfordshire Lent Assizes (Cont from last week). *Northampton Mercury*. 26 March. p 3d.

¹⁶ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1842-1850). Blunt, John. PSA1/2. p 19. BLARS, Bedford.

¹⁷ Gaol Records. England, Bedfordshire. 1843. Blunt, John. BLARS. QGV11/2. Record Id: 14958.

¹⁸ *Cambridge Independent Press*. (1843). Bedford: Ampthill Petty Sessions Feb 16. The *Cambridge Independent Press* and *Huntingdon, Bedford and Peterborough Gazette*. 18 February. p 3c.

It is not long before John is appearing in court again. The *Northampton Mercury* on 12 August reports on a case of lamb stealing heard at Woburn Petty Sessions:¹⁹

William BROOKS who has been committed to Bedford Gaol on 15 occasions for poaching and John Blunt who has previously been tried for sheep stealing are accused of stealing two half-bred Leicester lambs belonging to Rev Mr SMITH, from a close near the road leading to Cranfield in the parish of Holcutt. The paper reports evidence given against Brooks for stealing the sheep. The evidence given against Blunt is that he was seen with Brooks on the land in question. Brooks is committed for trial and Blunt acquitted for want of evidence.

Shortly afterwards John is appearing before the magistrates at Woburn Petty Sessions again. The *Northampton Mercury* reporting on the Petty Sessions hearing on 10 November states:²⁰

Four noted poachers, from Cranfield, in the Ampthill Division, were charged with trespassing in a field in the occupation of Mr Henry STURGESS, in search of game on the 29 October. Their names were Benjamin WATTS, James PANTER, Daniel SALISBURY and John Blunt. They do not appear in court and Panter is fined £5 as he had a gun and the others are fined £2 and costs as they were only trespassing.

John next appears before the Quarter Sessions at Bedford on 2 July 1844 to answer a charge of Sheep Stealing. Depositions entered into on the 12 June 1844 record the statements of William READMAN of Holcut, farmer; Charles Flint of Cranfield, PC; William MILLARD of Cranfield, butcher; and John Blunt.²¹

William Readman in his statement says

I am a farmer living at Holcut in this county. I also occupy a farm in the Parish of Cranfield. On Sunday afternoon I counted my sheep and lambs on the Cranfield farm and found them light. I counted them again on Monday afternoon between 2 and 3 o'clock. I found one lamb missing. It was a remarkably short and thick lamb being short in the legs. I hardly ever saw such another. I have examined the lamb now produced by Police Constable Flint and I have no doubt whatsoever of its being my lamb though I will not swear of it.

Charles Flint states

On Monday last the 10th I had information that there was something hid in a field of standing wheat belonging to Mr Hugh WHITE of Cranfield. I had information from Mr BEARDS, gamekeeper. I went to see what it was and I found part of the carcass of a lamb now produced wrapped in a cotton handkerchief. I then got the assistance of another man and we concealed ourselves in a deep ditch about a hundred yards from the spot where the lamb was. This was about 12 o'clock. At about 7 o'clock in the

¹⁹ *Northampton Mercury*. (1843) Bedfordshire: Woburn Petty Sessions Nov 10. *Northampton Mercury*. 26 June. p 3d.

²⁰ *Northampton Mercury*. (1843) Bedfordshire: Woburn Petty Sessions Nov 10. *Northampton Mercury*. 26 June. p 3f.

²¹ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 2 July 1844. Blunt, John, Depositions. QSR1844/3/5/25. BLARS. Bedford.

evening I saw the prisoner John Blunt in the adjoining field belonging to Joseph Faulkner. He then went up the side of a very high hedge. He was looking about as if he was apprehensive he might be watched. He then got over the hedge and came into Hugh White's field where the lamb was. He went along the top of the field walking very leisurely. He continually stopt and looked about him. He then came down a furrow in the wheat and stopt opposite the place where the lamb was, often looking round he turned to the right and went straight up to the lamb, took it up in haste, put it under his smock frock and walked away quite fast and got over the fence into Faulkner's [swards] close. I then pursued him and apprehended him about two hundred yards off the place where he picked up the lamb and I asked him what he had got. He made me no answer but dropt the lamb. I stood astride of it. There is a field of Mr Readmans between the field where the sheep are and Hugh White's field where the lamb was found. Only the leg of the lamb was missing.

William Millard in his evidence states:

I was called upon by Police Constable Flint on Monday last June 10 to assist him in watching the carcass of a lamb which had been found hid in Mr White's field. I am a butcher living in Cranfield. I have examined the lamb in question and know it to be an ewe lamb. It is a remarkably shirt thick lamb. I have heard the former witness give his evidence I swear it to be quite true. The lamb was hid in a dark spot of wheat when it was higher than in the east of the field. There is no footpath near.

John Blunt in his defence says:

I shall say nothing.

The jurors' presentment records the prisoner's plea of not guilty and the jury's verdict of guilty:²²

And the jurors aforesaid upon their oath aforesaid do further present that the said John Blunt on the tenth day of June aforesaid in the year aforesaid with force and (unreadable) at the parish of Cranfield in the County aforesaid one lamb of the price of fifteen shillings of the goods of William Readman did go with a felonious intent then and there to steal take and carry away part of the carcass that is to say the legs loins and innard fat of the said lamb against the form of the statute in the case made and provided and against the peace of our Lady the Queen her Crown and dignity.

The return of prisoners from the Quarter Sessions shows that John Blunt, aged 35 was sentenced to 10 years transportation for his crime.²³ The prison registers for Bedford County Gaol record that John was transferred to Millbank Prison on 26 July 1843 to await his transportation.²⁴

Joseph Dunkley

Little information is known about Joseph Dunkley before his crimes are found in the Petty Sessions Minute books for Ampthill. The 1851 Census records him as a

²² Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 2 July 1844. Blunt, John, Depositions. QSR1844/3/5/25. BLARS. Bedford.

²³ Court Records, Quarter Sessions. Bedfordshire. 2 July 1844. Blunt, John, Return of Prisoners. QSR1844/3/3/5. BLARS. Bedford.

²⁴ Gaol Records. England, Bedfordshire. 1844. Blunt, John. BLARS QGV10/2. Record Id: 7543.

Widower, aged 70 living at Cranfield West End. It records his place of birth as Brinkton, Northamptonshire and his occupation as an innkeeper and grazier. Living with him are his daughter Frances, aged 33, listed as unmarried and born in Chapel Brampton, Northamptonshire and his Grandson William, aged 4 born in Lavendon, Buckinghamshire. No evidence is found for Joseph in the 1841 Census for Cranfield, which would indicate that he is likely to have moved into the village sometime between 1841 and 1851. There is also no evidence for Joseph in the 1861 Census at Cranfield.

Joseph commits several crimes between 1850 and 1860, which are recorded in the Petty Sessions minute books for Ampthill.

He first appears in court on 27 June 1850 charged with having deficient measures. The court finds him guilty and fines Joseph 5 shillings or 7 days hard labour in the House of Correction. He duly pays.²⁵ Four years later on 28 August 1850, Joseph is in court charged with unjust measures. He is fined 10 shillings.²⁶ On 12 June 1856, Joseph is back at Ampthill Petty Sessions, appearing before Magistrates Charles MOORE Esquire and Rev George Gardner Harter. He is charged with selling beer before half past twelve on a Sunday. They find him guilty and fine him £1 to be paid immediately or 14 days in gaol. The fine is paid.²⁷

James Bates, superintendent of police appears before the Magistrate Charles MOORE on 7 January 1858 with a charge against Joseph for an offence against his tenants licence. A summons is issued for 21 January.²⁸ Joseph appears before the bench on 21 January where the case is dismissed.²⁹ He appears in court once again on 31 May 1860 charged with trespass in search of game. The magistrates, Rev George Gardener Harter and Rev W C CAMPION find him guilty fining him 12 shillings or 7 days in gaol. The fine is paid.³⁰

Evidence is showing that Joseph, and other traders, are habitually appearing before the courts and being convicted of the offences they are charged with. Perhaps with their ability to pay the fines and avoid gaol, they did not consider themselves to be criminal. In many cases searches in indexes would not uncover their criminal activities as they do not turn up in prison and Quarter Sessions records and the evidence of their crimes remain buried in the un-indexed records of the Petty Sessions minutes. □

²⁵ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1850-1854). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/3. p 11. BLARS, Bedford.

²⁶ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1850-1854). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/3. p 93. BLARS, Bedford.

²⁷ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1854-1860). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/4. p 32. BLARS, Bedford.

²⁸ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1854-1860). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/4. p 62. BLARS, Bedford.

²⁹ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1854-1860). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/4. p 63. BLARS, Bedford.

³⁰ Court Records. Ampthill Petty Sessions Minute Book (1854-1860). Dunkley, Joseph. PSA1/4. p 109. BLARS, Bedford.

NOTES AND QUERIES

Sent to Mary Wooldridge, research@bfhs.org.uk

Email from Geoffrey SEARLE, famsearle@hotmail.com

One branch of my mother's family came from South Bedfordshire, and I am interested in finding out more about her ancestors there.

Martha BIRD was my mother's great-great-grandmother. She was baptised in Hockliffe to Henry and Mary Bird on 8 Mar 1795. I can find other baptisms for Henry and Mary in South Bedfordshire - in Hockliffe, John CROOKEY-BIRD (CROKEY-BIRD?) on 31 Oct 1796. In Studham, Elizabeth Bird on 10 Oct 1798, Henry Bird 28 Aug 1803, and Joan Bird 2 Sep 1804, but this might be a different Henry and Mary perhaps. No more in Bedfordshire after 1804 that I have been able to find.

Martha married a young soldier, Thomas HUNT, in St Mary, Hitchin, on 7 Dec 1811, and after that Martha and her children lived in Hertfordshire. In the 1841 Census for Hitchin there is a Henry Bird age 71 of independent means. Martha and her family, including daughter Elizabeth my mother's great grandmother, were also in Hitchin. On Martha's second marriage in Ippollitts on 7 Feb 1850 to Samuel BARKER, she gives her father's name as Henry Bird, blacksmith. Henry died in 1841, in Hitchin.

Was Henry the son of John and Martha Bird? Baptised in Leighton Buzzard on 19 July 1769. John Bird and Martha SEAR married in Leighton Buzzard on 6 Feb 1769.

a) I would like to find Henry's marriage to Mary. I think it was to Mary RAVENSDEN in about 1793, most likely Bedfordshire. Mary was probably the daughter of William Ravensden and Mary Crokey who married in St Sepulchre, Holborn, London, on 27 Feb 1772 by License. Mary's baptism was on 2 April 1775 in Hockliffe.

b) I would like to find Mary's burial. It must have been between 1796 and 1841, again maybe Bedfordshire, as I have not been able to find it in Hertfordshire. [Mary's note]. Further information makes me think Mary may have outlived Henry who died 1841.

Email from Barbara DAWSON, rdawson1@bigpond.net.au

My mother was born in Meppershall, Bedfordshire. I started researching my mother's family many years ago, she was born Rose TAYLOR in 1897 daughter of William Charles Taylor whose parents were George WALKER 1848-1930 and Mary Anne Taylor 1848-1921 who had 'The Bucks Head' at Little Wymondley. My grandfather was born before they were married so was always known as Taylor though his many siblings were Walkers. They seemed to move from Pirton in Herts to Arlesey in Beds. Surnames on my family tree include Taylor, LAWRENCE (LAURENCE), DAVIS, USHER, DOWNES, LAKE, WRIGHT, ALBONE, and numerous others. But the Albone (spelt many ways) family I am finding very difficult to follow. I have a DNA match from America going back to an Albone, but I cannot connect that Albone to my tree. I would love to correspond with other researchers.

Email from Vida DOCHERTY, vida.docherty@btinternet.com

My 2 x great-grandmother's name is Emma FAUNCH, baptised in Milton Bryan on 30 Nov 1823. Father's name William, mother's name Sarah. The marriage certificate does not help with age as it just says 'of full age'. I have found what I think might be her siblings in the Parish Register of Milton Bryan.

The other children of William and Sarah are William, John, Edward Phillips and Ruth. In all cases the surname is spelled FANCH.

Emma married my 2 x great-grandfather Reuben Theodore GLOVER on 30 November 1846 in the Parish Church of St Mary, Newington. Her father's name is given as William Faunch and his occupation is servant. Both witnesses were from the family of the groom.

I have not been able to find Emma or her family after the record of her baptism. I am assuming that they stayed in Bedfordshire, but at some stage Emma must have gone to London. Any information gratefully received.

Email from Jan COSTIN, jancostin34@gmail.com

Nathaniel Costin born about 1710 (need proof of birth), married Hannah SMITH in Godmanchester, Hunts, 1736. They had 3 sons, Phillip, Nathaniel and John.

There is a will for Nathaniel Costin of Bedford, will proved 15 Sep 1772 in which he forgives a debt to a cousin, Costin of Godmanchester (I am guessing Phillip) and makes bequests to him and his brother at Kimbolton (Nathaniel, again a guess).

Nathaniel Costin of Bedford is the son of Thomas Costin of Wilstead. I have a suspicion that Thomas is related to the father of Nathaniel Costin, but have not been successful in getting access to the will of Thomas Costin of Wilstead who died about 1732, or records of his birth to show his parents' names, or likewise, the parents' of Nathaniel. This name runs through four generations of our family.

My main quest is to find the connection between these two families. There seems to be a lot of Costins in and around Bedford and even a Costin Street in the town! (There is a Costin Street in Brisbane named after my husband's great-grandfather.)

Email from Maz MORTON, mortonmaz@gmail.com

I have scant information for my great-grandfather. His name was George CLARKE and according to the 1891 Census he states he was born in Woburn, Bedfordshire, about 1838. The 1891 Census show him living in Queens Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. I have no other Census for him before 1891. I have no parents' names or siblings if any. My paternal grandfather was born Albert Clarke in Hemel Hempstead in 1893. His birth certificate records his father's name as being George Clarke. The address given on my grandfather's birth certificate is Mill Pond Side, Hemel Hempstead. My grandfather had two brothers Frederick and George. Frederick was a half sibling, but George who was born George MORETON 1888 Hemel Hempstead was my grandfather's full brother. Any help much appreciated. □

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Every effort is made to transcribe correctly the interests supplied by members but where hand-written details are provided errors may occur, for which we apologise. It would help greatly if all interests were either typed or written in BLOCK CAPITALS. When writing to a member please include a stamped addressed envelope or International Reply Coupons, and it is only polite to reply even if no connection appears to exist.

Surname	Place/Parish	County	Period
Carol Mounfield (4484) carol.mounfield@hotmail.com			
Deare/Dear/Deer	Arlesey/Shillington	BDF	16C - 19C
Gentle	Stotfold	BDF	18C - 19C
Gentle	Ashwell	HRT	16C -18C
Mounfield	Sandbach/Frodsham/ Warrington	CHS	17C - 20C
Proffitt	Warrington	LAN	18C - 19C
Sanson	Warrington	LAN	18C - 19C
Sarl/Sale/Searle	Stotfold/Arlesey	BDF	18C - 20C
Smith	Warrington	LAN	18C - 19C
Tansley	Stotfold/Arlesey	BDF	18C - 19C
Wickes	Lutterworth	LEI	18C - 19C

Karen Peck (4490) eastanglianroots@outlook.com

Guest	Any	BDF	All
Parrot	Any	BDF	All
Mathers	Any	BDF	All
Soulsbury	Any	BDF	All
Salisbury	Any	BDF	All

WELCOME

Welcome to Claire Sowah as BFHS Programme Secretary and
Joanna Lang as the BFHS Social Media Co-ordinator



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

facebook.com/BedfordshireFamilyHistorySociety

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

We notify our members via email about any zoom/hybrid meetings; however, some get bounced back and for some members we do not have an email address.

If you have not been receiving these emails from us it means that:

- 1) we do not have your email address or
- 2) the email address we have is incorrect or
- 3) your mailbox is full.

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

Many thanks,

Peter Sharp, Treasurer

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

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

Professional Service Offered. All Enquiries Welcome

THE FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

Aspley Guise is rich in beauty, both natural and architectural. Its situation, in a narrow valley, has encouraged the creation of sloping or terraced gardens, with luxuriant evergreens and giant holly hedges half hiding and half revealing picturesque houses. A book might be written about the great families and houses of Aspley in the past. Happily many of the delightful houses survive, and here are two typical Georgian residences of red brick with slate roofs. The house on the right, with its dormer windows, is roofed in the 'mansard' style, in which the face has two slopes, the lower one steeper than the upper.

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



It was not hard to find these too beautiful houses, very much the same today as in circa 1943. The big problem was to get a photo that shows them both with the growth of hedges and trees. Cars parked on the road was also a problem.

There are many well built and maintained houses in the area and if you look on *google earth* you will see many have swimming pools and tennis courts. One could spend many hours walking round Aspley Guise and not get bored of the fine architecture. The church of St Botolph's is a fine example with its origins going back to the Anglo-Saxon times. You could then move on to Woburn Sands and Woburn itself. □

OUR RETURN TO MARK RUTHERFORD SCHOOL

We are pleased to announce that the Friday night meetings of the BFHS have returned to Mark Rutherford School. The 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 again.

Returning to the school is subject to whatever COVID restrictions may be in place at the time and, of course, the weather!

Please do not attend the meeting if you have a cough, fever, or other COVID symptoms.

When attending, please be mindful and respectful of others and occupy seats with plenty of spaces. On entering and leaving, please maintain some social distancing out of courtesy to others. Although it is not a legal requirement to wear a face covering, the government advice and encouragement is that we wear them in indoor spaces where we gather with others who are not in our own household. Hand sanitisers will be available. Additional ventilation of the venue may be required so wrap up warm!

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.



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.

**AGM plus a talk on
Lingering Legacies
Pamela Birch - Bedfordshire Archivist
Friday 10 June 2022 (note date)**



On her mother's side 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.

The good that men do lives after them, but sometimes with evil consequences. Pamela will address some of the legacy issues regarding the catalogues to some of the Bedfordshire Archives collections most used for family history. She will look in particular at the Bedfordshire wills, marriage licence allegations and monumental inscriptions. Although focusing on the collections at Bedfordshire Archives, Pamela's talk may give clues as to why similar catalogue anomalies may be found elsewhere.

!STOP PRESS! The AGM and talk will be live streamed, **but** only those at the School in person will be able to vote at the AGM so please turn up to make the AGM quorate.

**Fleshing out the bones
Ian Waller
Friday 1 July 2022**



Being able to find information about an ancestor's everyday life will enable you to build a story and put your ancestors into their contemporary environment. The talk looks at the wealth of documentation left by an ancestor which will create this picture and put flesh onto the bones through social, local and family history resources as well as giving some presentation ideas.

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

PROGRAMME (cont'd)

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*'.

RAF Henlow

Edward Martin

Friday 9 September 2022 (note date)



Edward (Ted) Martin is a retired Editorial and Production Manager for a major legal and academic publisher with over 60 years in the industry.

From its start at almost the end of the First World War until its possible closure in 2023, RAF Henlow was never in the front line and never had the glamorous status of Biggin Hill, Duxford or Hornchurch as a fighter station. However, it was essential to the survival of the RAF in the Second World War providing engineering and technical back-up. It also provided communications support in the Falklands conflict, trained many officers, had other essential roles and appeared in post-war films.

Tracing your AG LAB ancestors

Dr Nick Barratt

Friday 10 October 2022



In this talk, Nick will explore some of the sources and resources that will help you research your agricultural labourers - in many ways, the most populous group in society through history, but often the least understood. This is a shame, as we will all have agricultural labourers in our background, sooner or later - the trick is to identify them and step into their shoes, following their seasonal and often precarious way of life.

Dr Nick Barratt is an author, broadcaster and historian best known for his work on BBC's '*Who Do You Think You Are*'. He is an honorary associate professor of public history at the University of Nottingham, the Director of Learner and Discovery Services at the Open University, a teaching fellow at the University of Dundee and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. His latest publication, '*The Restless Kings*', explores the reigns of Henry II, Richard I and John. He concluded his term of office as President of the Family History Federation in June 2021, but remains President of the Hampshire Genealogical Society, sits on the Executive Committee of the Community Archives and Heritage Group, works on the Historians Collaborate network and is part of the Midlands 4 Cities Doctoral Training Partnership Advisory Group.

BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TEA TOWELS

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

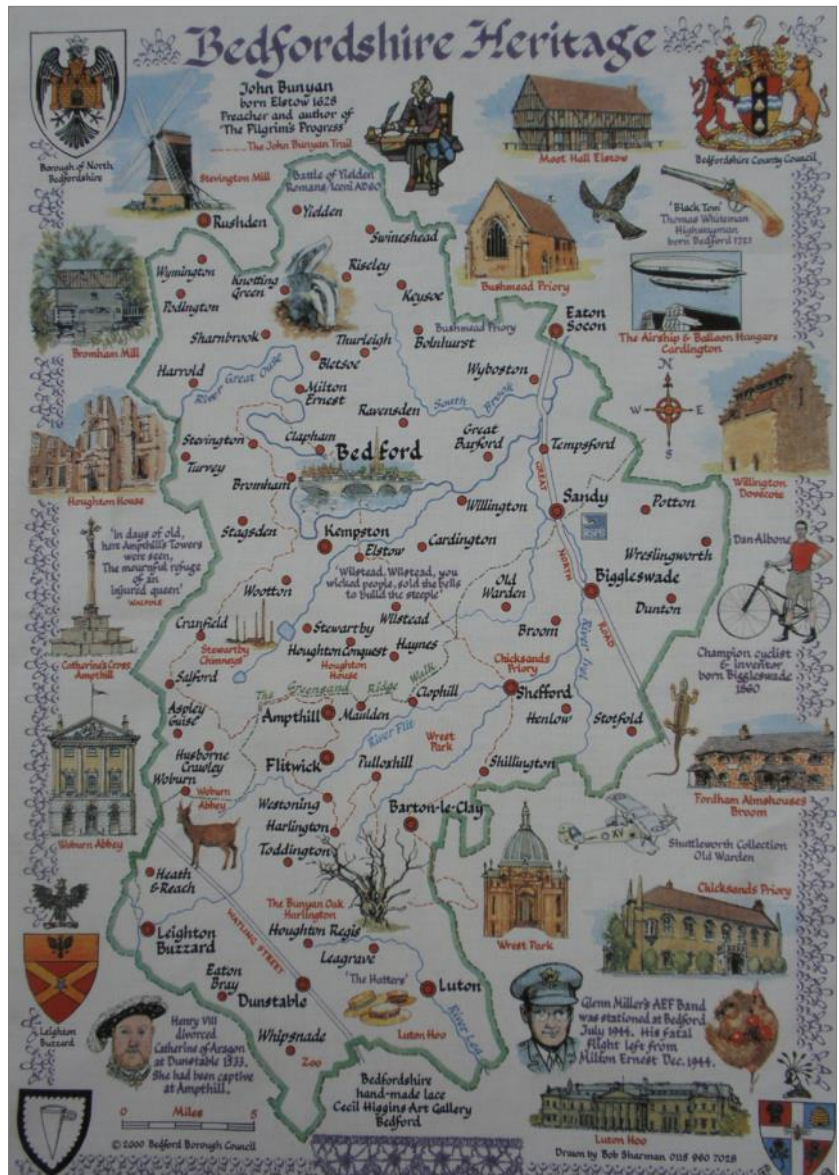
These tea towels are really too nice to use for drying up; they are beautifully colour printed with some famous Bedfordshire landmarks forming a border for the County map. Even if you do not have any Bedfordshire ancestors they make ideal gifts.

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

secretary@bfhs.org.uk,

or by post to Lynn at:

38 Risborough Road, Bedford, MK41 9QW, Tel. 01234 306482.



For UK orders please add postage and packing as follows:

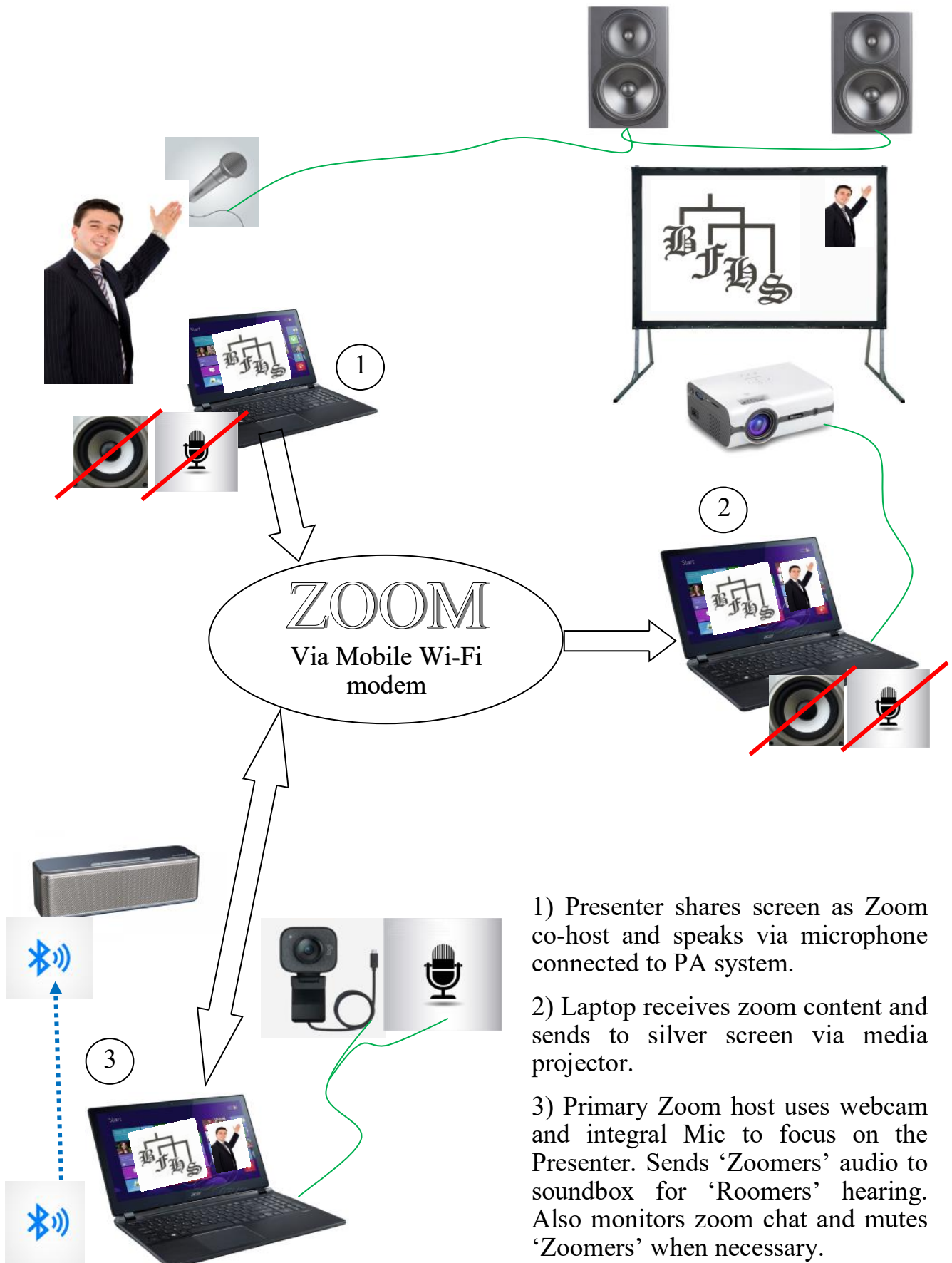
- Up to 2 tea towels add £2.00
- 3 to 6 tea towels add £3.00

For orders from outside the UK please enquire before ordering.

Cheques should be made payable to Bedfordshire Family History Society.

BFHS HYBRID MEETING IN-ROOM SET-UP

How we continue to bring 'Roomers' and 'Zoomers' your Monthly Talks



AN EMOTIONAL DISCOVERY OF NEW FAMILY

Jane Parker

You are invited to join me on a personal journey of discovery as I uncover the mystery of:

A man whose name was different from his birth registration;

A woman who took a secret to her grave;

A daughter whose enquiring mind unravelled decades of secrets, to reveal the truth which eventually resulted in family reunions as she found her 'long-lost family'.

The man was my father George, the woman his maternal great-aunt Louisa (sister of his grandmother Susanna), and the daughter is me - Jane.

The story begins with my father George who was unofficially adopted by his maternal great-aunt Louisa and her husband George. Little George was about 4 years old when he went to live with them in Bedford. George was born in Twickenham where his parents, younger brother and grandparents remained living. Little George is recorded on the 1910 School Register and 1911 Census return in Bedford. He had a happy childhood and was loved.

Fast forward to 1949/50 and George is now in his mid-40s, married to Hilda with a daughter Jane, aged 4, living in Bedford. Aunt Louisa died December 1945. My parents decided to emigrate to Australia. To obtain his passport George needed his birth certificate. It is hard to contemplate his shock reaction to the stark revelation that he was not who he thought he was. His registered name was George Harry ABBISS-SKILMAN rather than George Clive BOWLER. Furthermore, a document was drawn up by a Commissioner of Oaths stating George's parents perished in an accident, he was brought up by George (pop) and Louisa from a young age and given their name, Bowler. This was signed by George, his step-father. We returned home to Bedford in November 1954.

During his early young life in Bedford, George's maternal grandmother Susanna lived in Weybridge and on occasion George and Louisa used to take him to visit her and his younger brother Robert.

In 1979, husband Michael and I went to Twickenham. My sheer delight on sighting Holly Road, the very street where my father was born! Close by on the banks of the river Thames we entered St Mary's Church. A lady verger was present and happily showed us the Register of Baptisms. I located baptismal records for both George and his brother Robert. I was walking in their footsteps.

In the same year we went to St Catherine's House and trawled through numerous volumes. Hope ended in frustration and disappointment. Dear friends visited St Catherine's House, there they searched 60 volumes and found about 30 names, only one had the double-barrel surname. In the Register of Deaths for the March quarter 1918, Brentford, was Christopher L Abbiss-Skillman, aged 3, birth year about 1915. Date of death was 21 Jan 1918 and the burial was 31 Jan 1918 at St Mary the Virgin, Twickenham.

I could not bring myself to reveal to my father the record for this dear little boy, so

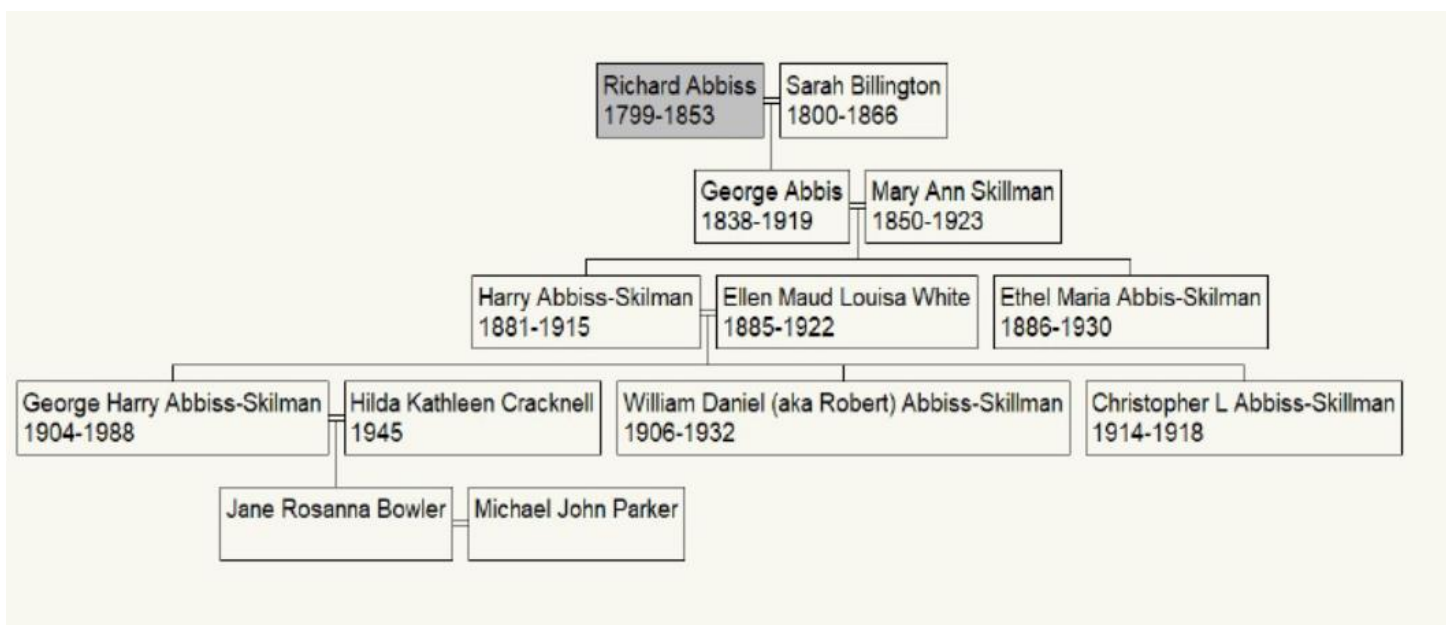
obviously his brother, about whom he knew nothing. For me it was soul searching, and with my dad aged 75, it was kinder to keep another secret. Among the other names was the death of Harry Abbiss aged 34, registered 1915, Brentford. Unbeknown to me at the time, this was George's father in Twickenham.

In 1983 with his health ailing, Dad came to live with us until his death in 1988. I registered his death in both names.

Now retired, my enquiring mind was determined to unlock these century old secrets. Office management, computer technology, had marched on during my years of absence from the workplace. Undeterred, help was at hand in the local library. Records were readily available from *Ancestry* and *FindmyPast* and easy to access for the computer literate. Again, the library came to my rescue by providing a volunteer who gave instruction on computer skills. It was my dawn of discovery BIG TIME. I have not looked back and was fortunate my teacher had researched his family history online. The session was 1 hour 15 minutes - it flew by! My family name Abbiss-Skillman was uncommon so this would be easy. No!

Last 15 minutes of the session with Jane, head in hands, sought inspiration. "Please look for George Abbiss, 1901 census, Twickenham." To my delight, joy and relief - a result - an elderly man, George and his wife Mary Ann, birthplace Ampthill, Bedfordshire and Southam, Warwickshire respectively. Feeling ecstatic, I dashed home to share my excitement with Michael. This was just the beginning of the roller-coaster ride of emotions - highs dashed by lows, revived by highs. Who were George and Mary Ann?

I am very grateful to the staff at the Bedford Archive Office for their repeated help and assistance each and every visit. The identity of George and Mary Ann was established as my dad George's grandparents. George Snr was the youngest of 11 children born to Richard and Sarah Abbiss, a Master Blacksmith of Woburn Street, Amptill. In a short space of time I had copies of numerous documents and an Abbiss family tree spanning generations. Mary Ann's maiden name was Skillman - derived from the Old Norse for Trustworthy. The earliest ancestors were located in Deddington, Oxfordshire.



From the basic information on my father's birth certificate, I was becoming overwhelmed with information collected over many visits to the Bedfordshire Archive Office. I am very grateful to the archivists for the help I received from them and I was now adept at finding information on *Ancestry.com*.

My next quest was to locate and visit the graves of my Twickenham family and pay my respects. It was possible they did not have headstones. I enquired at the Council Department and in return received a map together with accurate locations of each grave. Another mystery was solved - Robert Abbiss-Skilman had a headstone with his name, not Robert, but William Daniel Abbiss-Skilman. They were one and the same person. His birth, marriage and death were recorded as William Daniel Abbiss-Skilman. Only his baptism record was in the name Robert. Another discovery was after the death of Harry Abbiss-Skilman. Granny Ellen had re-married and they had a son Arthur. My dad George, unbeknownst to him, had a half-brother. I had an uncle who survived. For me these sad deaths were tinged with something deeper. Here were my paternal nearest and dearest shrouded in secrecy and mystery. Their youthful ages have left their mark. I do believe great-aunt Louisa saved my father's life, for that I am eternally grateful to her. The scourge that took their lives was TB. My grandad Harry and Christopher L Abbiss-Skilman were buried in paupers' graves.

The information and emotional experiences were affecting me in a positive way. I was learning who the other half of me was. Dad and I were an unknown quantity, within me was a void. Things were changing for me for the better. The quest was to find my family.

In Twickenham, I met the widow of my dad George's first cousin Frederick, together with her daughter and son. They knew nothing of my father, however they did know Robert, and by that name. Eileen was elderly and we were distant in both time and location. I was made welcome and learned about Frederick's brother Lewis who married a Cambridgeshire lass from Wisbech. In the meantime I discovered a related family living in a village near Amptill and wrote to them. Meeting Phoebe and her son John is one I shall remember like no other. John's likeness to my father took my breath away. Family photos revealed without doubt I had cousins, descendants from William, brother of my great-great-grandfather, Richard of Amptill. We have met other members of this branch of the family. Feelings of belonging and being made welcome were impacting on me like gentle waves on the sea shore - they just kept coming.

More was to follow when I discovered a name in our Cambridgeshire phone directory. The lady at the other end of the phone thought the call was a 'wind-up', but as I continued talking she realised it was genuine and confirmed our relationship as cousins. These are my closest paternal cousins living here in North Cambridgeshire to our East Cambridgeshire. As with the Bedfordshire cousins, we keep in touch on a regular basis and look forward to the time when we can meet again.

Sadly, I was unable to meet dad's half-brother, Arthur. He had dementia and was living in a retirement home. It was ironic that, at the time, dad was living with us. Arthur and his wife were 12 miles away at Haverhill. Beryl and I kept in touch, she sent me a lovely photo of Arthur, my only link to my grandmother Ellen. Arthur knew Robert and called him Bob, but he knew nothing of my father George. Arthur has two sons.

I enjoy watching the TV programme 'Long Lost Family'. Perhaps you would like to find your family? I hope my story has encouraged you. Through DNA testing, I match with other distant cousins, three of whom I am in contact with via email as they live overseas in Canada and Australia. Meeting with and being accepted by new found family is a wonderful experience and has made me a complete person. I am as proud of my paternal roots as I have always been of maternal ones. □

REMINDER

The CLOSING DATE for articles to be published in the September 2022 *Journal* is **31 July 2022**.
(Articles submitted near the closing date may not be published until the following *Journal*)

SUGGESTION BOX



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. □

FAMILY HISTORY FEDERATION WEBSITE

Have you visited the website of the Family History Federation? In case you have not visited the website of the Federation, **familyhistoryfederation.com**, the following abstracts may spark your interest to do so. When you visit the website you will find information about:

- News and events, listing information about various talks and events by different FH societies.
- Details of all the Family History Societies/Groups that are members of the Family History Federation
- Surname interests - This page provides a search facility to all the Member Interest Surnames that are registered through the various FH societies.
- Federation Resources, some of which are listed below:
- Read a free copy of the Federation's '**Really Useful Leaflet**'
- You can subscribe to their regular newsletter '**Really Useful Bulletin**'
- There are links to Parish Chest, Family History Books Online and the FHF REALLY USEFUL Family History Show on the homepage.
- **Beginning your Family History:** They offer an online four-week course for those new to family history or wanting to improve your skills. Typical cost £15.
- **Really useful Podcast:** A new series of podcasts, introduced by Jo Saunders, who is joined by a range of other experts, discussing various family history research topics. Each podcast lasts about 30 minutes. The first six episodes of Series 1 include: Occupations, Young People, Online events, Social Media, One-Place studies and Newspapers.
- Information about projects about:
 - **National Burial Index.**
 - **First world war conscription tribunals.**
 - **Revision of the Manorial Documents Register.**
 - **Lancashire crew lists.**
- Information about FFHS resources covering:
 - **Can DNA tests help you?**
 - **Research tips.**
 - **Using original records.**
 - **Free online services.**
 - **Free websites.**
 - **My Family Tree booklet.**
- Information on education:
 - **Everyone has roots.**
 - **Using FamilySearch Family tree.**
 - **Genealogy from a gravestone.**
 - **Presenting skills using PowerPoint.**

- Featured Websites
 - **Discovering English Ancestors**
 - **The Online Genealogical Index (OGI)**

We are certain you will find that the Federation website is well worth a visit. Family History Federation is the operating name of The Federation of Family History Societies. □

MEMBERS' LETTERS

MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO SUBMIT LETTERS/EMAILS TO THE JOURNAL ON TOPICS RELATED TO FAMILY HISTORY, PARTICULARLY THOSE LINKED TO BEDFORDSHIRE. THE JOURNAL COORDINATOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO EDIT CONTRIBUTIONS.

From Karen THATCHER, karen16thatcher@gmail.com.

I am researching the surname of 'CONQUEST' and its variants and have only just joined the Bedfordshire Family History Society. My connection to the Conquest family is through my grandmother Elsie Conquest. My father never spoke much about the family so 15 years or more ago I started researching the name to see if there were any skeletons hidden anywhere. We have been visiting my grandparents grave in Croydon, London, since 1966 and decided to research whether their parents were buried in the same cemetery. After searching the books in the Cemetery Record Office (£17.50 per hour) I found my grandparents and the Officer said there were actually four family members in the grave. I was excited then gobsmacked when I was told that my great-grandparents were in the same grave as my grandparents and no one had told me. I was cross but at the same time pleased that I had found them, it appears that the husband of one of my aunts did not have their names put on the new gravestone when he ordered it.

I then searched all the records I could find then and including the census returns and found that our Conquest family had originated from Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, with many baptisms recorded at both St Mary's and St Andrew's churches. I had been in touch with a lady many years ago and lost contact. I am searching for anyone with Conquest or variants in their tree as well. The lady I had been in touch with had found that the family had firstly originated from Bedfordshire, Houghton Regis and Houghton Conquest, and then spread around to a few other counties. I believe she is correct as I have recently searched every county and Country as far back as possible and am currently creating an Index of them. It had been thought that Conquest originally had come from Brest in France but it has since been proved that although there are a few with the surname, it had originally been only a nickname in France.

If anyone is connected to the Conquest family please get in touch, I would love to hear from you. □

LIBRARY NEWS

John Partridge, Librarian

New Librarian Required.

There is still a requirement for someone to take over looking after the BFHS library at meetings after I leave the position later this year. If anyone is interested then please contact me or the BFHS Committee so that details of the role can be made available to you while I am still in the area.

Recent Acquisitions

Class 4

Family History Handbook 2022

Family History Magazine, 2021

This must-have genealogy pocket book for family historians was a freebie with the Christmas edition of Family Tree Magazine. It is packed with loads of updated information on sources of information for you to carry out your research.

Class 2

Life in Bedford During the Second World War

Stuart Antrobus (BAALHS, 2021)

This large-format paperback tells the story of how Bedfordians' lives were affected by the dramatic upheaval of war between 1939 and 1945. Peppered with the voices and personal experiences of men, women and children who lived through this turbulent period, it captures the life-changing ways in which, while the armed forces fought around the world, people on the Home Front fought their own domestic war locally. The book is illustrated with over 80 photographs, some for the first time. Evacuation, air raid precautions, conscription, rationing of scarce resources, volunteering, fundraising, 'digging for victory' on allotments and recycling were all activities which became an everyday part of Bedfordians' lives. Women's roles changed as they took the place of men in vital industries or supported them in the armed forces.

Class 10

My Cherry Family of Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire

Richard Cherry, 2014

This personally published book regarding the Cherry family of South Beds/North Herts that has been well researched and documented. It is a lovely read and contains lots of family photographs and family trees. Note a pdf copy of this book is available from the Members' Portal of the BFHS website.

Beds FHS Facebook page

In the March 2022 journal I reported that we had 1076 'likes' and 1236 followers as at 5 January. We have progressed and as at 10 April we have 1119 'likes' and 1286 followers. Thanks to all of you for your continued interest regarding your Bedfordshire ancestors. If you need assistance then why not message us or drop us a visitors post and we will attempt to respond to you with an answer.

FINDING WILLIAM

Jan Darts

My DARTS family tree is full of 'Williams' - plain William, William Alexander, William Alfred, William David, William Henry, and William Johnathan Reginald. Trying to make sure that timelines did not merge was quite difficult, particularly when the family decided that grandfather's (or even great-grandfather's) first name should be carried into the next generation by having more than one son named William. During a search of the General Register Office (GRO) indexes to ensure that each William had a robust background, I came across Alfred William Darts born in 1880 to Julia Darts (nee SANDERSON). Unfortunately, my Darts family tree had neither an Alfred William nor Julia Sanderson!

Intrigued, I searched online resources to see which of the Darts family she had married and which might reveal a lost branch of the family. The search produced a record of a marriage between Julia Sanderson and William WHISSUM on 27 May 1871 at Wrestlingworth, Bedfordshire. Was this the mother of Alfred?

The Census of 1881 records the family WISSON (spelling of the surname varies across time and most of the players in this story could not read or write to verify the spelling):

Page 10]		The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the													
Civil Parish (or Township) of		City or Municipal Borough of		Municipal Ward of		Parliamentary Borough of		Town or Village or Hamlet of		Urban Sanitary District of		Rural Sanitary District of		Ecclesiastical District of	
Wrestlingworth		Highwards													
No. of Schedules	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES		NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	(1) I (2) I (3) I (4) I				
		In-habit-ed (A)	Un-in-habit-ed (B)				Male	Female							
47	Village	1		Rebecca Holburn	Head	W		68		Beds, Wrestlingworth					
48	"			Ann King	Head	W		65		Beds, Wrestlingworth					
49	"	1		William Wison	"	Mar		24	Ag Lab	Beds, Wrestlingworth					
				Julia do	Wife	"		30		"					
				Clara do	Daughter	"		7	Scholar	"					
				Rosa do	do	"		6	"	"					
				Emma do	do	"		3	"	"					
				Alfred W do	Son	"		6mo		"					
50	"	1		Joseph Sanderson	Head	Mar		62	Ag Lab	Beds, Wrestlingworth					

The youngest child is Alfred W, aged 6 months, giving a birth date of 1880. Note that Joseph Sanderson listed just below Alfred and living next door is Julia's father. As this appeared to be my Alfred William, I thought that perhaps the birth certificate might provide further clues:

403	Twentysecond September 1880 Wrestlingworth	Alfred William	Boy	William Darts	Julia Darts formerly Sanderson	Farm Labourer	Julia Darts Mother Wrestlingworth	October 1880	Wrestlingworth Registrar
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Alfred's birth date of 22 Sep 1880 aligns with the age given in the Census which was taken on 3 April 1881. However, his father is given as William Darts and mother as Julia Darts. *FamilySearch* records a baptism on 31 October 1880 at Wrestlingworth

with the father given as William Darts and mother as just Julia, but no image is provided to verify the record.

I spent several days exploring different scenarios that might create this apparent anomaly, even considering that perhaps Alfred was the illegitimate son of William Darts, rather than the son of William Wisson, but was welcomed into the Wisson family as one of their own. After all, many of the Wrestlingworth families had illegitimate children living with them so this would not be something out of the ordinary. The light bulb moment came when I looked at the GRO records for all the Wisson children, and I nearly missed these records because of the variation to Julia's Maiden Name:

Name:	Mother's Maiden Surname:
DARTS, CLARA	SAUNDERSON
GRO Reference: 1871 J Quarter in BIGGLESWADE Volume 03B Page 341	
DARTS, ROSE	SAUNDERSON
GRO Reference: 1874 J Quarter in BIGGLESWADE Volume 03B Page 355	
DARTS, EMMA	SAUNDERSON
GRO Reference: 1877 J Quarter in BIGGLESWADE Volume 03B Page 383	
DARTS, ALFRED WILLIAM	SANDERSON
GRO Reference: 1880 D Quarter in BIGGLESWADE Volume 03B Page 327	

Surely, the only explanation for this anomaly is that William Wisson is William Darts?

An examination of my family tree quickly revealed the truth. Sarah Darts gave birth to William on 5 Dec 1846 but did not marry Benjamin WHISSUN until 3 Jan 1847. At the registration of the birth of William on 22 Dec 1846 no name was given for the father or the child:

471	Fifth of December 1846 at Wrestlingworth	Boy	Sarah Darts	The marks of Sarah & Charles Mother Wrestlingworth	Twenty second of December 1846	H. Barker Keel Street
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The un-named male child was therefore a Darts as per usual practice. Whilst William's marriage was registered using his likely father's name of Whissun, whenever a child of his was registered, they used his birth surname of Darts for the child and mother. This must have been at the insistence of the Registrar. However, although Alfred's birth was registered as a Darts, his marriage to Lilian BIRD in 1908 was registered under the name of Wisson, as were the children that followed.

Changes in recording practice and variations in name spelling just add to the complexity of creating an accurate family history, but must have created great confusion for the family. I am grateful for the work undertaken by Mary (research@bfhs.org.uk) who independently came to the same conclusion on Alfred and indicated this was not an unusual situation.

In the end, Julia's children will not be on the Darts tree and will remain as Wissons. I have enough Darts to track down.

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