

NEW ACCESSIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

Bedfordshire Archives receives new deposits, transfers and gifts of material approximately twice a week. Some new accessions consist of one item, whilst others can run into hundreds of items. As our collections are arranged and referenced to indicate provenance and ownership, some new accessions create new collections, being the first from a particular source; others are additions to collections already held.

There has been a flurry of important accessions to the archive collections lately and we thought we would use this newsletter to share some of them with you.

Archivists have to admit that most archives do not look very pretty or exciting—it is the information they contain that is important rather than their appearance. However, recent additions to the Lucas collection included some particularly beautiful items.

The existing Lucas collection that we hold was almost all deposited between 1936 and 1991. It is an estate collection, but includes substantial personal correspondence from the 18th and 19th centuries of the family that owned the estate and their associates. The estate centred on Wrest Park at Silsoe, the principal seat of the family until its sale in 1917.

On the death of Anne, The Baroness Lucas, in 1991, the family retained certain material about Wrest Park and the picture collections it had once contained, and some of the personal writings of earlier members of the family. Bedfordshire Archives knew about some of these items, such as the commonplace book entitled *Wrestiana* and the 1831 album *Views of Wrest*, because in the 1970s we had been allowed to make copies of them for the use of researchers. From the requests we have received to use the copies, we know that this material is of great interest to researchers.

As you may be able to imagine, a 1970s photocopy or 35mm slide do not generally do the original material justice and therefore we were delighted when the family contacted us to make arrangements for the deposit of the originals of these items and other material relating to the collections at Wrest. The Lord Lucas delivered the material personally and it is fair to say that the county archivist hasn't stopped smiling since, as she has admired and



shared with others the beautiful items previously only known to her through faded grey photocopies.

Wrestiana is a collection of plays, poems, and acrostics generally written in a humorous style and referring to the family at Wrest, their friends and relations. Dating from 1743-1783, it is thought that it may have been created for the Philip Yorke, 2nd Earl Hardwick, the husband of Jemima, 2nd Marchioness Grey, Baroness Lucas.

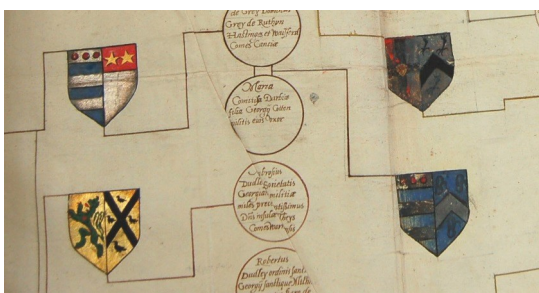
Wrestiana is important as a source of material for high society of the late 18th century. The album *Views of Wrest* is a beautiful resource for anyone interested in the history of the buildings and gardens of Wrest. The album consists of a series of grisaille views of Wrest's old house, buildings and garden features in 1831 with notes on when they were built, moved or subsequently 'pulled down'. It ends with views of the new house. Although all the paintings are executed in shades of brown, they are lovely, and each has interest added by the figures who occupy the views, whether they be lords and ladies admiring the statues, or the gardeners with their wheelbarrows.



Many of the volumes deposited relate to the pictures that used to decorate the walls of the house at Wrest. A series of volumes contains black and white photographs and details of paintings by artists such as Canaletto, Gainsborough, Kneller, Rembrandt, and Van Dyke. They have been annotated and updated to record later sales of the paintings. Alongside these volumes are a similar series of volumes for 'Family Portraits' in which the details given record a little of the biography of the sitter. Although the photographs are black and white, they give a very good idea of what the paintings looked like. Two volumes from the 1830s also record the portraits, but these include drawings and full-colour watercolours of the paintings. Comparison between the photographs and the watercolours is particularly interesting, as the artist has sometimes enhanced details that are not so clearly defined in the photographs, or has struggled to produce the details of the oil painting. Another volume gives the location of the portraits within the rooms at Wrest.



Within the deposit there are also: inventories of miniatures and furniture; the memoirs of Earl de Grey; and the history of his building of the new house at Wrest written for his daughter, Ann. There are also some legal papers relating to sales of land and Lord Cowper's legacies. Finally, there is various material relating to the pedigree of the family, including a



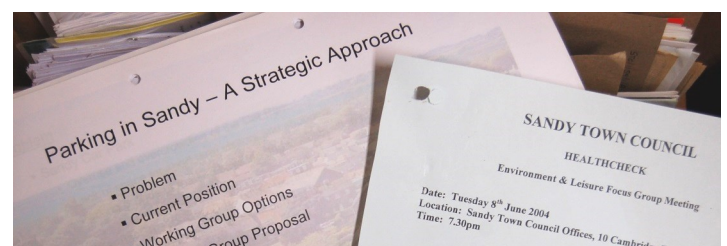
spectacular family tree showing the arms of the various families in paint and silver and gold gilt.

Unfortunately, the format of the binding makes it rather hard to follow as you try to trace the coloured lines of different branches of the family from page to page.

The new material will be catalogued as soon as possible under references L34, L35 and L36. I would like to thank The Lord Lucas and the Palmer family for depositing this material and my former colleague, James Collett-White, for his assistance and advice leading up to the deposit.

The second recent accession we would like to tell you about is also an addition to an existing estate collection. It consists mainly of family letters of the Longuet-Higgins family who once owned the Turvey Abbey estate. Thanks to Mr James Hunt and his extended family, the HG collection will now include more information on the later generations of the family, some of whom lived in Turvey until 1952.

When the material arrived some of it was quite nicely arranged and labelled, however one bundle of correspondence was in no order at all. Volunteers Helen and Linda were asked to try to sort out the deposit ready for it to be catalogued. While doing this Helen came across a piece of writing in different handwriting to the rest and dating from an earlier era. It is a humorous description of a Christmas Eve tea party given by Mother Music for her numerous descendants and helpers. Helen was struck by how clever it was, for example 'The Drums (who were requested to leave their sticks in an umbrella stand till after tea) were appointed time keepers & the kettle drums kindly lent their kettles to help to boil the water for tea...The Rests were a quiet & taciturn family, but often gave first aid when the merriment went on too long...' Judging from the handwriting it may be the work of John William Burgon (1813-1888), friend and brother-in-law of Charles Longuet-Higgins of Turvey Abbey; although Charles' brother, Henry Hugh Longuet-Higgins (1814-1893), is another possibility.



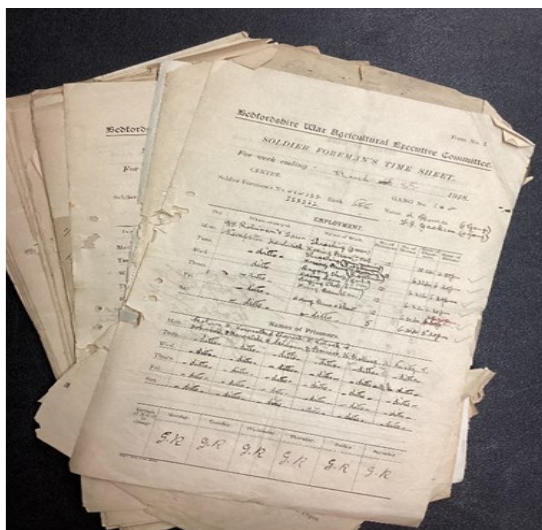
Not all new deposits can be quite so pretty to look at or so entertaining to read, but they are important nonetheless. Sandy Town Council has recently deposited minutes and other papers from 1974 to 2012 that record the administration of the town. Some of the particular projects in which the town council has been involved, include the search for ground for allotments, parking surveys and strategies for the town centre and the acquisition and management of amenities. This is the first deposit from the town council and has the reference TCSandy.

Conservation Corner—records of world war on the home front

WW1 and WW2, a large collection of Bedfordshire Home Front war-related correspondence between the offices of national and local government and associated material, recently came to the attention of Conservation. A survey revealed over 200 boxes of material consisting of old files, notebooks, tied bundles and loose letters, some of which are very sooty, some torn or damaged and some showing signs of poor historic storage conditions. The paper was often hole-punched for filing. Metal fasteners such as rusty staples, tags, pins and clips need to be removed. The typical quality of the paper is flimsy as you would expect of letter paper, but, well taken care of, this paper is surprisingly robust.

The project is currently being tackled by some of our volunteers. The material is being cleaned, sorted and organised into labelled folders in order to make finding the documents easier and to protect them more effectively in the future.

The level of local detail in this collection makes for very interesting reading, for example, correspondence concerning the fate of named men returning from war; land use on particular Bedfordshire farms during both world wars; details of the day-to-day work of local defence organisations; the organisation of shelters and air raid warnings; local war-effort charity work and much more.



A completed box with bundles inside neatly packaged and labelled.

WE WILL REMEMBER

Bedfordshire Archives, as the county record office for the county, tries to capture documentary information about the county and its people at all periods, but this is not always easy to do, particularly in periods of rapid but temporary change such as the Covid pandemic.

At the end of World War One and World War Two, the office made concerted efforts to gather in local material relating to the administration of the home front in the county. The archive service's own archives show how, as World War Two was reaching its end and home front activities winding down, Joyce Godber attempted to find out what records had been created and to get at least some of these deposited with the archive service (CRD1/5).

These attempts were partially successful and two collections were created - one set of records relating to

World War One and the other to World War Two, but both being given the reference W/.

Over the years, this reference system became increasingly frustrating as it was difficult to distinguish one set of records from the other and difficult to distinguish them from the Whitbread estate collection, which has the reference W. We don't undertake re-referencing lightly, but sometimes it is necessary, therefore, in the late 1990s, it was decided to change the war collections to reference prefix WW1 and WW2. The recent conservation work on the collection detailed above revealed that this renumbering had never been completed! With the help of volunteers doing the repackaging, we are now taking steps to complete the task, so if you have been using the W/ series of war records, please note that they will be changing reference and you may need to update your notes.

WE ARE ONE HUNDRED AND TEN!

On the 24th October 2013 Dr G. Herbert Fowler became the chairman of the Bedfordshire County Council's Records Committee and, by adopting the report he had written for the committee the previous year, began to put in place all the things that make us a county record office. It is for this reason that we take the 24th October as our service's birthday. This year we celebrated with cake (of course) but also by sharing it with members of the Libraries Hub staff who have recently joined us as part of the combined Archives and Libraries Hub team. We gave the libraries hub staff tours of the Archives and Records Management areas and they gave archive and records staff a tour of their areas—although we have co-existed in the Riverside Building for over 30 years it was the first time many of the staff had ventured into the territory of the other service areas.

Later in the week we ran tours for colleagues from other departments within the Borough Council and



This year's cakes—dense chocolate , apple strudel loaf and a Victoria sponge, intended to represent 110.

Central Bedfordshire Council to explain more about what we do, the importance of good record keeping, and how records may be selected to become archives.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY, LUTON HOO WALLED GARDEN

A big thank you to our friends at Luton Hoo Walled Garden and the Luton Hoo Estate for allowing us to have a stand at their Heritage Open Day on the 13th September. The weather was lovely for a stroll around the walled garden, but fortunately people also came into the marquee to talk to archivists Tom and Helen about the collection of medieval Luton title deeds acquired by Bedfordshire Archives in January 2023. As well as talking to the archivists, visitors could try their hand at reading old handwriting and see the display that gave information about the people and places named in the documents.



FOR YOUR DIARY

6-10 Dec 2023 Bedford Christmas Tree Festival

St Paul's Church, Bedford

Visit the Christmas Tree Festival and see if you can spot our decorations on the Heritage Bedford Tree. This year's theme is Kings and Queens.

more details <https://www.facebook.com/bedfordchristmastreefestival>

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