

## RUSSELL COLLECTION

### **Beds. and Bucks Estates: Administration and Finance**

#### 1722 – 1802

When the rentals begin in 1722, the Bedfordshire estate consisted of the "manors and townships" of Woburn, Brogborough, Potsgrove, Husborne Crawley, Eversholt and Eaton Socon, and estate administration was rudimentary. The Bedfordshire Steward from this date until 1737 was Joseph Willoughby, resident at Woburn, and paid a salary of £100 a year. Apart from the Abbey and Park servants and labourers, the only salaried estate officials were two woodwards, Richard and Samuel Sinfield. The principal duties of the resident Agent were the collection of the rents, the making up of the accounts to send to Bedford House, supervision of the tenantry and general estate administration. The payments listed in the first rental cash-account of 1729 are mainly for estate repairs and the cost of managing the woods, though they also include such items as the payment of the salary of Thomas Thornicroft for teaching the 30 poor boys at Woburn School, and the cost of cloathing them.

Large estates employed a chief agent to supervise the local resident agents, and the first of these whose personality emerges clearly from the estate records was Robert Butcher, Agent-in-Chief from c. 1739 - 1761. The activities of Robert Butcher and his staff of clerks at Bedford House has been described in detail by Gladys Scott Thomson in *The Russells of Bloomsbury*. It was probably he who sorted, filed and endorsed the mass of estate deeds in the "evidence room", and instituted the meticulous system of docketing all the business papers that passed through his hands. The chief agent was often a lawyer, and was frequently given the title of Auditor since it was his duty to verify all estate accounts sent up by the local agents, a duty which in the nineteenth century gradually became the function of professional accountants.

During Willoughby's stewardship, small purchases of lands continued to be made in the Woburn area, but a major addition to the Russell estates in Bedfordshire was made with the Bruce purchase in 1738. It included the Honour of Ampthill, and in this way the first subdivision in the estate rentals and accounts began. On the purchase of the Honour, a detailed rental and survey was made, and from 1739 - 1839 the accounts form a separate series - a very useful source of information about buildings especially in Ampthill and Shefford. Usually a member of the Davis family, solicitors of Leighton Buzzard and Ampthill, collected the rents and administered the manorial business of the Honour.

In the north of the county the Duke acquired an interest by the purchase in 1737 of the manors of Oakley and Ravensden from the Levinz family. Further acquisitions in the area were made steadily from this date. The Oakley map of 1737 in the Russell collection shows the old Manor House, then used as a farm house, on the site of Oakley House, with the plan of Oakley House sketched in at a later date. It appears to have been originally built by the 4th Duke (R general vouchers show that the house was built 1747 - 1749, architect Thomas Moore) and improved by Holland in 1789-90; subsequently it was used as a country seat by the 5th Duke and the Marquess of Tavistock. This development of the Oakley estate was the origin of another series of accounts which begin in 1759, the 'collector' or agent being Thomas Butcher, who

was also responsible for the Honour of Ampthill from 1760-1781. By 1760, therefore, four rent collection areas had emerged: the Honour of Ampthill; the remaining estate south of Bedford which was the province of Samuel Miller, who succeeded Sam Davis as resident Steward at Woburn; Bedford, Goldington and Cople where the rents were collected by his assistant Henry Hurst; Oakley and North Bedfordshire, the responsibility of Thomas Butcher. There are no Chenies accounts for the eighteenth century except wood accounts, but from these and from the correspondence it is evident that Chenies had a separate steward up to 1810: Robert Harris (1727-48), John Davis, nephew of Robert Harris, (1748-85), and William Davis (1785-1810). The Chenies steward was also responsible for the Hitchin leasehold estate and for Chesham.

In 1774 the 4th Duke's trustees bought the Bedfordshire lands of the Duke of Marlborough; the greater part of the property was in Cople and Willington, but it included lands in Goldington, Ravensden, Renhold and Wilden. From 1774 to 1781, Thomas Butcher was agent for the Cople and Willington estate. He was probably the son of Robert Butcher [R 3/168], and references to 'Mr. Butcher' in the Astwick Farm accounts (1749-50) suggest that he was employed by the Duke of Marlborough in that capacity previous to the purchase of the estate by the Duke of Bedford. He may, indeed, have continued to serve both masters, since there is a reference in a letter of 1766 to his being "concerned for His Grace of Marlborough" at Holdenby [R 3/238]. Certainly he ranked next in importance to the Woburn steward until he left Bedfordshire for Bloomsbury in 1781 [L 5/639].

His Cople and Willington accounts are of considerable interest in throwing light on the progress of a private enclosure of the estate. The 1779 maps in the Russell collection of Cople and Willington show the pre-enclosure divisions with the enclosure plotted on them, and new farm buildings such as those of Castle Mills Farm, sketched in. There are numerous references to planting and weeding young quicks, for example: October 1776 "John Elmer and co. a bill for weeding 112 poles of young quick at John Crootes new enclosure". In February 1777, 2,100 young quick sets were paid for, and in the following month the commons of Cople were "staked out". Underwood was used to protect the young bushes, and there are frequent references to mending the hedges "against" the young quicks, and to stopping gaps in the quicks. By 1777 there was a nursery of young quicks. In the Woodward's account for Cople and Willington, 1776, there is the following item: "Dec. 13 John Wright paid sundry expenses having Thomas Barcock to Bridewell and having him whipped for breaking hedges." Extensive building was undertaken on the estate. In 1776 "John Frost and his man" came to search for and to dig clay; by May the same year a brick clamp was in operation and coal was being fetched from the river Ouse. By October 136,000 bricks had been paid for. In 1779 William Stocker was paid for the freight and toll [by the Ouse Navigation] of 6,000 "water bricks" from St. Ives. The repairs and building undertaken on the various farms and other premises in Cople and Willington are all recorded in a large ledger, which shows that a timber yard had also been established. On Thomas Butcher's departure, William Bodinson, the Woburn steward, took over the administration of the estate.

The manors of Knotting and Souldrop were also bought in 1774, and from that date until 1780 they formed another separate accounting district, administered by John Wing junior (probably the son of John Wing who was agent for the Thorney estate at

this time). Only one cash-book (for 1778) has survived, but fortunately the very detailed ledger, especially the "sundry repairs" section, shows that the same process of private enclosure was followed on this estate. In 1775 there is a reference to Souldrop new inclosures, and entries similar to those in the Cople and Willington accounts provide ample evidence of the progress made. Brick-making would seem to have been on a smaller scale; some of the building would seem to have been timber frame and thatch, and there are interesting references to bringing sheaves of reeds by river from Thorney and the Wash.

Thus the system of accounting reflects the rapid growth of the Bedfordshire estate during the eighteenth century, and the ad hoc measures taken to meet the increasing demands upon the resident steward at Woburn. In the case of Cople and Willington, Knotting and Souldrop, it seems that the new estates were placed under separate agents in order that the enclosure and necessary rebuilding should be carried out efficiently, and in 1781-2 the Woburn steward once more took charge. William Bodinson, the steward at this date, was responsible for all the Bedfordshire estate accounts, though he had the assistance of the agent, Samuel Davis, who collected the rents for the Honour of Ampthill, and of Jeremy Fish Palmer whose collection area included Bedford, Eaton Socon and Dry Drayton in Cambridgeshire. There is a gap in the accounts from 1785 - 1792, but the correspondence shows that the work became too much for one man. Writing in 1790, William Jones, the steward who succeeded Bodinson, complained to the Agent-in Chief that "I have nobody at present to assist me and I do assure you that the constant flow of business here cannot be kept under without some assistant as a copying clerk. Mr. Bodinson has been in the habit of making use of assistance that does not meet my liking." Such assistance was particularly necessary in the case of William Jones. It is evident from the correspondence that he had been in the Duke's employment for a considerable length of time, and that in addition to the business of the Bedfordshire estates, he was expected to manage the financial side of a Devon election, and in spite of his plea for the necessity of appointing an agent resident at Oakhampton, had to cope with Devon leases and accounts. He was frequently away from Woburn, collecting the Hampshire rents and dealing with the financial business of the Stratton estate, and on one such occasion had to hurry back to Bedfordshire - the Duke had sent for him "in expectation of a contest for the County." In addition he was worried about the vast expenditure involved in Holland's rebuilding of the Abbey, and uneasy in case mistakes should be made in the building accounts. In the circumstances it is hardly surprising that he died suddenly of "an apoplexy fit" in October 1792. His successor, John Farey, while apparently not burdened with such a variety of business not connected with the Bedfordshire estates, was also hard pressed. Writing to the Agent-in Chief in 1794, he apologised for the delay in sending his accounts: "I request you to understand that my accounts for your Office having been so long in hand, has been unavoidable on my part - the multiplicity of temporary business which occurs, and on which His Grace frequently gives me directions, must go unattended were I to apply myself more to the Desk than I do. I hope before lady Day...that I shall have more assistance in my office." It can be inferred that the work was found to be too much for one man; when the accounts begin again in 1801, the Bedfordshire estate (with the exception of the Honour of Ampthill) was divided into two districts: the Woburn district under the resident steward, and the Bedford (or North Beds.) district under a "land steward" or sub-agent, Edward Platt. Chenies continued to be separate from the Bedfordshire estate until 1810; after that date these three districts remained the basis

of the Beds. and Bucks. estate rentals and cash-books throughout the nineteenth century.

### **The Establishment**

The Establishment accounts begin appropriately with the building accounts for Flitcroft's rebuilding of the West front, and the addition of the stables, which has been described in detail by Gladys Scott Thomson in *Family Background* (R5/1092). The volume also contains four loose papers: a bill from Rysbrack for statuary and for carving two chimneypieces with rams' heads, fruit and flowers, and for a tablet with a nymph and sea monster; a letter from Flitcroft sending a sketch for the stable, and the sketch itself; and a statement of account by Samuel Miller, the resident steward. The volume is arranged to show cash received from the Duke - £85,000, payments made for the Abbey from 1748-62, and payments for the stables and offices from 1757-62. The accompanying account for the Park is unfortunately not very informative, and the 4th Duke's interest in planting and horticulture can only be inferred from brief references to the "new Pleasure Ground" and "work in the Plantations." In 1743 a rabbit warren in the Park was converted into the fine plantation of over 100 acres in extent known as the Evergreens. It is said that in this work the Duke was assisted by Philip Miller, the leading horticulturalist of the day (see 1749 vouchers). He also assembled the fine collections of porcelain and objets d'art, and much of the furniture which can still be seen at the Abbey. The Duchess, his second wife, purchased furniture and china during their stay in Paris where the Duke was ambassador. Sir William Chambers designed a bridge in the Park and fitted up the library and drawing room in 1770.

The 5th Duke made the Grand Tour from 1784-5 when he assembled a collection of statuary, and began to manage his estates when he came of age in 1787. Almost at once he began to spend on a vast scale, and the *Complete Peerage* remarks that "had he lived his extravagance would probably have ruined the family; as it was it compelled the sale of what would be now the enormously valuable Streatham property, as also of the Stratton estate." Henry Holland was commissioned to rebuild the south wing and to build an entrance portico, enlarge the stable blocks, and build a riding school, dairy, tennis court and conservatory. The Chinese Dairy was intended to house the collection of porcelain. An imposing entrance from the London road was built, and new houses for Park employees, kennels, a brewhouse and 'hovels' for the use of labourers. He also prepared designs for the George Inn at Woburn, the Rose and Swan at Bedford, and an inn at Houghton Conquest, and Birchmore farmhouse. The building accounts for the Abbey and for the Swan Inn have been preserved. William Jones, the Woburn steward, was soon in desperate straits for money. Writing to the Agent-in-Chief in August 1790, he complained, "The vast expenditure here is beyond conception - I am almost plagued out of my life for money." This was to be a constant refrain over the following years, and he remarked bitterly in 1798 "when His Grace is here he is so completely engaged that I can rarely introduce the subject of money, and when I do he is always averse to talk upon it or give drafts." The 5th Duke also carried out much of the landscape development of the Park; in 1792 Jones writes "As we are planting here in a very large style I have some hopes of obtaining a premium for His Grace's gardener from the Society of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce in the Adelphi for planting the greatest quantity of oaks." (R3/1243)

The 5th Duke was also one of the leading agriculturalists of his time, A friend of Coke of Holkham, and nominated an original member of the Board of Agriculture, he established the Park Farm at Woburn "with every convenience that could be desired for the breeding of cattle and experiments in farming." In the *History of Woburn* (1818) there is the following description: "All kinds of agricultural implements etc. are to be found here in the highest perfection. Here are also extensive buildings for fattening cattle, stables, piggeries, a large rick-yard, granaries etc. On the north side is a large yard, with workshops for the mechanics of various descriptions, and a timber yard...On the south side are extensive walled kitchen gardens, in the centre of which is a neat house for the superintendent. In the farm-yard is a commodious house for the bailiff, and on the west side, the agreeable residence of Mr. Salmon. In the various improvements which have for the last 20 years occurred in the Park and neighbourhood, the talents of the most eminent artists and mechanics have been engaged, and the whole carried out under the direction of Mr. Salmon, the Duke's principal surveyor, whose genius and abilities have been too frequently exerted not to be generally known and appreciated."

Robert Salmon was employed as Clerk of Works under Holland, and is said to have attracted the notice of the Duke during the building operations at the Abbey. He was appointed Surveyor in 1794, and designed Park Farm and many buildings and farmhouses on the estate which were considered models for their time. [ see Batchelor's *Beds. Agriculture*]. In 1797 the Duke instituted the annual Sheepshearings, the forerunner of the great agricultural shows of the next century. Lasting a week, they attracted farmers and agriculturalists from all over England and from the continent. Salmon was a mechanical genius "whose services in the improvement of agricultural implements were of remarkable, and in his day, of unique importance." His inventions and improvements, for example the Bedfordshire Drill, were one of the highlights of the Sheepshearings. The principal room at Park Farm used on these occasions had an ante-room with fine paintings of sheep etc. by Garrard, who also painted the famous picture of the Woburn Sheepshearing. The experiments with breeds of cattle and sheep at the farm were noted by Arthur Young in the *Annals of Agriculture*. Some records of these experiments have been preserved among Salmon's papers [R3/2114/1-56], and the general expansion of activity is reflected in the Establishment accounts.

### 1802 – 1839

In 1802, on the death of his patron the 5th Duke, John Farey moved to London where he established a practice as a consulting surveyor and won a considerable reputation as a geologist who adopted and applied the principles of William Smith who was engaged from 1801-3 in drainage experiments at Priestley farm. John Wing was responsible for Thorney Estate and from 1798-1803 the Bedfordshire estate i.e. North Beds as Land Steward. Edward Platt was Land Steward for Woburn Estate from Michaelmas 1800. From 1802 - 1806, responsibility for the administration of the Beds. estates was divided between Salmon as Surveyor and Dr. Cartwright as Land Steward [there is some dispute over the accuracy of this]. Edmund Cartwright, the inventor of the power loom, had turned his attention to agricultural improvements, and had been appointed by the 5th Duke in 1800 to supervise experiments which continued until 1808. Salmon was responsible for repairs at the Abbey and on the estate, and for the woods and plantations, while Cartwright's department included the

Park, Park Farm, the pleasure grounds and gardens. Zachariah Mancock, the House Steward, managed the household and its provisions.

In 1803 the rest of the establishment consisted of:-

Park Whitbread  
Plantations Ireland  
Pleasure Ground Dowdale  
Kitchen Garden Martin  
Park Farm Wilson  
Speedwell Farm Clayton  
Maulden Farm French

In 1806, Robert Salmon finally took over the Stewardship, with the assistance of Edward Platt as Land Steward. In that year the responsibilities were reapportioned by William Adam, the Agent-in-Chief, to provide for more efficient management of the estate and establishment. The new system is set out in his report to the Duke in 1806 which is appended in full.

William Adam, who became Agent-in Chief in 1804, was not only responsible for reorganizing the management of the Beds. estates, but also instituted important reforms in the accounting system. He was appalled at the general state of the family finances: having collected all the available evidence on the financial position as a whole, he addressed a memorandum to the 6th Duke showing the necessity for an "immediate and rigorous plan of retrenchment and economy." He predicted that if things were allowed to go on as in the past, the debts would total nearly half a million pounds in ten year's time. The report is so interesting that it has been fully transcribed and appended. The expenditure at Woburn seems to have given him the greatest anxiety, and he evidently spent much time at the Abbey, undertaking a personal inspection of the system of administration and accounting, a personal inspection of the system of administration and accounting, as well as conducting personal tours of the estate. The Duke's absence in Ireland from 1806-7, when he was Lord Lieutenant there, gave Adam the opportunity to put his plans for retrenchment into practice. This necessarily involved improved accounting methods, since economy depended on the receipt of detailed and accurate information as to the number of men employed, works in hand or projected, household expenditure, profit and cost returns from the farms in hand, woods produce, and similar information which would enable him to review the situation continuously. In his 1806 report he stated that he had discussed all the points involved very thoroughly with Salmon, and the new series of account books for the estate, establishment and woods were undoubtedly the result of these consultations. They included a new type of rental, establishment cash books with detailed headings, ledgers, fortnightly reports of repairs and improvements, of operations and labour, and of farm cost and produce, together with fortnightly, quarterly and yearly abstracts. The bailiffs of the farms in hand were instructed to keep a cash book, a stock book and a cropping book, and R3/2115/1 shows how these accounts were integrated into the main system. The woods produce books were expanded to include general estate produce in the Woburn district - Crawley Kiln, the storeyard, fuller's earth and fuel. [see diagrams] The accounting system was thus set on the basis it retained until 1840, and it can be said that he laid the foundations of the entire nineteenth century financial organisation of the estate.

[Papers of William Adam]

Prosepective View of Affairs to shew the Necessity of an immediate and rigorous Plan of Retrenchment and Oeconomy

Expenditure on the present plan of 1804

No. 13 View 1804	£33,700
No. 1,2,3,4, Compendious View	12,650
No. 12 and 13 The Duke's State	3,650

Not sufficient I fear for its objects

Put at this sum because it is about the surplus of this yrs fund over the £33,700.

Even numbers. £50,000

Establishment etc. £50,000

Suppose this to continue next year 1805

Income as this year free say	£31,000
Saving of two quarters income tax	1,700
Saving on Montague Street etc.	3,000
	£35,700

Expenditure beyond income £14,300

NB The income of 1805 is overstated

for there is the interest of the necessary

borrowing of 1804 - £40,000 to come off it 2,000

Expenditure beyond income £16,300

When the Ground rents of Russell Square etc. become effectual they never can rise to a sum sufficient to cope with such an expenditure and in the best state of things, it must always continue £10,000 a year at least beyond the income, so that taking the debt now added £40,000, next years exceeding £16,000 - ten years more at £10,000 per annum £100,000. Interests accumulating in that time, the debt will not be less than..... £190,000

Provision for younger children .....300,000  
490,000

To stand against this there is nothing but the falling in of annuities £18,000 a year which never can counterbalance it and there is no allowance in this statement for Lord Tavistock's Establishment, while the state of public affairs leaves little to hope to counterbalance it by improvement of property as the increase of taxes and other burthens will exhaust that natural and hitherto sure source of relief from debt by the improvement of landed property.

The precarious state of so important a part of the income as Thorney cannot fail to make an impression at this time, a misfortune in that quarter might in the present state of expenditure, compared with income, prove an irretrievable blow.

I hope I do not view this in too dark and despondent a light, it is the result of much anxious reflection and of the most sincere attachment and ardent desire to be useful - this is the crisis at which firm resolution will retrieve, or I should rather say, maintain the family in that character of splendour, dignity, utility and beneficence which has distinguished it for ages. It should be considered as a person that is never to die, and the first object ought to be, and is, to maintain it in all the characters that belong to it - the fervour of this impression may carry me beyond the bounds of common representation, but it cannot equal the extent and sincerity of my zeal, admiration and regard.

I can look to nothing but a continuance of solid beneficence and real enjoyment and comfort but I think that can be found in the resolution to confine the expence within the limits of the present clear income.

The only means to retrieve a fortune great or small is to circumscribe the expence to the income. In this case the resolution should be to restrict it to £30,000 a year. Things may be so managed as to do that-it must be the work of a few months and it must be conducted with a sound mixture of delicacy, discretion and firmness - It must not meet the public eye, in the apparent abridgement of enjoyment, hospitality or charity, nor by withdrawing those acts of public liberality which the situation of affairs may call for, but must be obtained by lopping superfluities, regulating the oeconomy of present undertakings and postponing additional improvements.

The months which are about to be spent in town will be the true season for regulating such a system. It is a new era and gives leisure for the work.

It must commence with obtaining the means of paying off what debt is contracted and doing at once justice to the tradesmen, and honour to the employer it must then proceed with vigorous and firm instructions to circumscribe all the Agents in their expence and to form estimates on reduced plans.

This detail shall be the subject of constant consideration and I have no doubt of its turning out effectual in all the aspects in which it ought to be viewed.

As to its effects on the future state of the family it is clear. The Ruinous result of the present plan and establishment has been pointed out; it now remains to shew the result of the proposed plan.

It will be as follows

Income of 1805	£31,000
Add 2 quarters income tax	1,700
Savings on Montague Street	3,000
	35,700
Proposed restricted expenditure	30,000
	5,700
Interest of £40,000 to pay debts now contracted	2,000
Saving in 1805	3,700

In 1806 Ground rents come in



suppose them at their completion to add	4,000 per annum
Saving	3,700
	7,700
10 years saving	£77,000

with accumulating interest not less than £[ ] or supposing the ground rents to be (in the course of that period appropriated to Lord Tavistock's Establishment and that the plan should only afford £50,000 saving, the annuities will come in aid of the provision necessary for younger children whose establishment will not then encroach on the protecting utility, splendour and dignity of the head of their family.

I fell confident that the sincerity and zeal which dictates this view, will justify the freedom with which it is made, and I have it more anxiously impressed upon my mind, not only because my duty calls upon me to exert my utmost ability and industry to stop the affairs from getting into that disgraceful distress which the continuance of the present expenditure must bring on, but likewise because I ought perhaps to have foreseen more clearly and to have met the difficulties more firmly at an earlier period.

The details by which the result of this plan of retrenchment and oeconomy is to be carried into execution must be the work of time and repeated consideration. In general my view is to reduce the expenditure stated in no. 13 view 1804 at least one third, taking one head with another, by which a fund will be found for those heads which are now destitute. To attain this it is necessary to get at the detail of all the persons who are fed or employed in all departments distributing them according to their duties.

The ground work of retrenchment and economy rests on the abridgement of unnecessary service and labour; the reduction of materials and bills follows of course, and the way to consider how this is best to be done it to have the means of reviewing in detail who the persons are that have employment and what they are employed about, and this leads to the knowledge of the number of animals of all sorts.

I have already given directions to the different heads of departments to make such states out and I have in part obtained it as to the Park Farm and Dairy.

....

There is a source of assistance as to pecuniary relief which I think may be looked to with confidence to a certain extent and which may be obtained without any apparent diminution of the dignity or influence attached to the possessions of the family.

It is to get free of those detached and useless parcels of property which create great expence proportioned to their annual produce.

Such as, the Borough Lands & Houses of Camelford and interest there. The North Petherwin and Werrington Estates. The North Devon Estates and the Bedford Circus in Exeter, together with the remains of the Surrey estate.

These will relieve from the care and expence of endless repair and as some should sell well either in perpetuity or for lives, they will tend to lighten the burthen of the present necessary borrowing.

I have considered maturely whether any saving could be made in the expence of management but I believe a comparison of the state of rents and salaries will shew that there is rather reason to apprehend that in some quarters there will be a demand of augmentation than any hope of diminution on that head.

Report by William Adam, 10th April, 1806

The Bailiffs

They all delivered in their states of stock, crops and ploughing and sowing.

Ma ulden French's amounts to	£4469
Speedwell Clayton's amounts to	3257
Park Farm Wilson's amounts to	<u>8329</u>
Capital employed in the Farms	16045

N.B. This is independent of buildings, fences, gates, draining or any permanent erection - and is independent of the payment for labour - or the purchase of provision for the support of stock.

In the accounts of the Bailiffs what is given here as gross sums is subdivided into different heads. The accounts are now with Salmon who has directions to make copies to be transmitted to the Duke of Bedford.

The Agents

Dr. Cartwright has paid over the balance of cash in his hands to Mr. Salmon who is now completely invested in the payment of what has hitherto been under Cartwright.

Mr. Salmon has delivered over to Mr. Platt the list of men employed by him and Platt is now completely invested with the superintendence of repairs.

They are now the agents on the Bedfordshire property which is divided into two distinct heads, making as it is conceived the best possible practical arrangement.

1st Head

Mr. Platt collects all the rents, transacts with all the tenants, directs all the repairs which are now like all the other repairs on the Duke of Bedford's estates, paid by the Agent before remittance. Hitherto the Bedfordshire rents have been paid in nett after payment of taxes and some small outgoings, and the repairs have been paid by the Duke's orders on Child.

The remittances by the Bedfordshire Agent will be less by the amount of repairs than they have hitherto been and likewise by whatever may be laid out under Mr. Platt's inspection in repairs of fences.

On the fences Mr. Platt has directions to survey and report, and it is proposed to regulate the expenditure on fences to a sum not exceeding £1000 a year

2nd Head

Mr. Salmon has the superintendence of the woods in South Beds, the Brick Kiln and other articles of repair or building. These he will supply to the estate in South Beds at

the price of the country and Mr. Platt will make regular application for what he may require.

It is proposed to have a wood yard for repairs at Maulden and another at Woburn by fencing off a part of that now occupied by Mr. Salmon at the Park Farm. Mr. Salmon has the superintendence of the Abbey repairs, of the repairs of Farms in Hand, of the Park repairs and all connected with what may be called the family establishment at Woburn - NB During the absence of the family the small household expenditure, the wages, board wages, donations, pensions etc. are to be paid by Mr. Salmon and kept in a separate book so as to be handed to the House Steward on his return. The account of all expenditure for the preservation and killing of game is likewise to be kept distinct.

All payments respecting the Establishment and the Farms are now completely vested in Mr. Salmon, to take date from Lady Day last.

The different matters to be done prevent the reduction in the Pleasure Ground and Park being accomplished to their utmost extent. Still there is some immediate saving.

The paper no. 1. will show the precise state of the whole fortnightly expenditure under Salmon. Paper no. 2 the whole proposed extra expenditure in the year. Paper no. 3 the extra demands on the Agent of the estate.

#### The Accounts

The mode of keeping them was very thoroughly discussed by me with Salmon and I think is well understood.

The stock having been taken will now form a regular charge on each farm and keep a profit and loss account. The result must turn out clear.

It has been thought advisable to render this perfectly perspicuous and not involved with any other matter, to remove all supplies from the farm to other servants such as Bullock, Salmon etc. and to have nothing come into the Farm a counts but the nett expenditure of the farm on the one side and the produce on the other. N.B. Bullock seemed adverse to have a sum of money to provide his horses with therefore I have settled it (in order that so old and faithful a servant may not be disturbed in his arrangements) that the provision shall be purchased by Wilson and handed over to Bullock and Salmon, and that Salmon shall supply the money for more purchases.

The Bailiffs are each provided with 3 portable books - one for Cash Account, one for Stock Account, one for Cropping Account. This embraces all labour and enables them to make the regular reports to Salmon and so to have them regularly transmitted to the Duke of Bedford, by which not only the expenditure but the nature of the work done and of the purchases and where done or made will be seen.[R2115/1?]

During Salmon's stewardship the organization of the estate and establishment reached a form which was to change little during the next fifty years. It was as follows:-

Woburn Resident Steward

Principal Accounts Clerk

Wood Books Clerk

Land Steward

Two clerks to the Land Steward, one of whom was woods bailiff for N. Beds.

Abbey House Steward

Gardener + 15 labourers

Park Keeper + 4 gamekeepers

Park Farm bailiff

Farms in hand bailiffs

Superintendent of storeyard

Crawley Kiln manager

Woburn District woods bailiff ( also responsible for the nursery and plantations)

Writing to the Agent on his retirement in 1820, Salmon described his method of keeping account: "From the commencement of my trust, I have adopted a practice which cannot, I think, be too closely adhered to by all persons chargeable with other persons' property, namely to have the cost vouchers to all transactions that their nature will admit of. This I have effected by having my cash-book open and kept by others, by being the payer and receiver only, and making others keep and produce accounts of all labour etc., so that all the journals of labour paid by me are good vouchers, tho' unaccompanied with any receipt, which cannot be obtained from every labourer; this, and that no article be sold from the woods without a bill made out from an entry first made in the proper book, I consider a good general rule."

The Bedfordshire woods were divided into two districts at this time: the North Beds woods were managed by a woods bailiff resident at Bedford, with the help of three foremen, accountable directly to the Woburn steward for produce sold, wages paid etc.; the Woburn district woods were also under the management of a woods bailiff who was responsible in addition for the nursery and plantations. [ see introduction to Woods section]. The Chenies woods formed a separate district; it is said that Salmon was appointed stewards of the Chenies estate in order to improve the system of planting and to give proper attention to methods of pruning trees and seasoning timber. Salmon was accustomed to do all the marking, valuation and sale of timber himself, but towards the end of his stewardship had to give up direct superintendence of the North Beds. woods. Writing in 1820 he said: "From the additional trouble of looking after the hedgerow timber, and from my inability to ride on horseback, I have lately taken but little active part in the woods north of Bedford. At first entering therein I fully communicated all in my power to Mr. Kent [clerk to the Land Steward and woods bailiff], and he has acted thereon to my satisfaction and is fully competent to manage that department." Salmon retired in 1820, and was succeeded by William Hirdle as Resident Steward, with Joseph Tween as Land Steward. Tween acted for one year (1827) as Resident Steward until Edward Crocker took over the post. He continued as Land Steward until replaced by Thomas Bennett in 1831. [ R3/2837]. The duties of the Resident Steward in the 1830's were set out fully by Edward Crocker. [ R3/2244]

## The Establishment

In spite of the unremitting efforts of William Adam to curtail expenditure, the 6th Duke also lived up to his income; the *Complete Peerage* states "he would never economise or reduce his expenditure, leaving that task for his successor." Like the 5th Duke he was an ardent collector of statuary, prints and other objects d'art. He started the Menagerie, and had a great interest in horticulture, especially ornamental planting and general improvement of the Park and pleasure ground. He was soon spending freely in this direction. Salmon writing to the Agent in 1821 apologised for the expenditure: "the call for repairs, painting etc. has much increased...it will require the joint efforts of Mr. Hirdle and Roote[ in charge of the store-yard] to keep all within compass." [R 3/2153] The Agent-in Chief, William George Adam, who succeeded William Adam in 1816, appealed repeatedly for economy, but apparently in vain. The Duke's projects continued, and the Woburn steward complained that the extravagance and incompetence of William Roote added to the problem. This led to changes in the management and organization of the store-yard and repairs when Bennett became steward.

Park Farm remained for a time a leading centre of agricultural experiment. George Sinclair, the Duke's gardener, undertook a series of experiments in the produce and quantities of grasses[R 3/2114/211], the results of which were set out in his *Hortus Gramineus Woburnensis*. But the Duke was something of a dilettante in agricultural matters, and the experiments begun under the 5th Duke were gradually discontinued. The Sheepshearings ceased in 1813 on the grounds that they had served their purpose in publicising and aiding the exchange of agricultural information.

The Duke's real interest lay in the gardens and pleasure ground. Repton undertook landscaping from 1804-1809, details of which can be found in the fortnightly reports and Salmon's accounts [R 3/2114, 534-72]. Sinclair's experiments with grasses were followed by the setting up of a heathery and a willow garden which included every known species, a pinetum and an arboretum, which led to the publication of further works by Sinclair on heaths, willows and ornamental shrubs and planting. A new flower house, or botanical house was built to Wyatville's designs in 1838 for the cultivation of succulents, cacti, tropical plants, palms, orange trees and other exotics. He also designed an araucaria. New kitchen gardens were laid out, four acres in extent (excluding the six acre fruit and herb garden which had been the original kitchen garden.) Forcing houses, 300 feet in length, with hot water heating were built for the cultivation of peaches, nectarines, figs, grapes, cherries, melons and pineapples. Details of these improvements can be found in Crocker's accounts and in the Duke's correspondence.

In 1818 Wyatville was commissioned to convert Holland's conservatory into a sculpture gallery. He or Repton had previously designed the Thornery as a "rustic retreat" for the Duchess. Blore designed lodges and cottages, as well as rebuilding Woburn market house and church tower. Other improvements made by the Duke included bringing a "ruined building" from Ridgmont to grace the Evergreens, the addition of "American" log huts and a rustic temple, and a remarkable grotto containing specimens of Devon marble and Cornish serpentine. Some of the heavy expenditure was occasioned not only by the Duke's works out by the menacing social situation in the early 1830's, a time of agricultural depression, unemployment and

unrest. Outbreaks of incendiarism alarmed Crocker and the Agent who instructed Crocker not to discharge labourers in view of the dangerous situation in 1830, and added that the Duke would agree to new works to remedy unemployment. Two years later, commenting on a charge that the Duke was oppressing the poor, the Agent remarked, "It is difficult for me to believe that any man in the county, ... would mean to make such an insinuation. It is hard that a man whose increasing anxiety is to afford employment...should be taunted." [R 3/2903]

### 1839-1872

When Francis, the 7th Duke, succeeded to the estates in 1839, he found them encumbered with £556,000 of debts, and with the support and assistance of Christopher Haedy, the Agent-in-Chief from 1839-58, he at once began a new strategy of management. He declared "it must be my part...to repair the breaches that have been made, or the family importance and influence will sink into ruin." The situation called for strict economy in estate administration so that the debts could be paid off out of income. Haedy fully supported the policy- "it will take more years than the Duke can be expected to live of prudent and restricted expenditure to bring down the incumbrances to something like a moderate amount." He formed a very effective partnership with the Duke; being very energetic, and possessing a great grasp of detail, he carried on a vast correspondence with the local Stewards. He introduced a thoroughgoing centralization of the accounting system requiring more detailed reporting by the stewards so that a closer and more frequent scrutiny could be made of their activities. He instituted quarterly auditing, and insisted on more detail on the expenditure side. He also began a system for estimating outgoings. Thomas Bennett, who succeeded Crocker on his defalcation in July 1839 in the sum of £2,100, had been the Land Steward since 1831, and held the office of steward until 1869. He was a very able man, and we are fortunate in having his extensive correspondence with its shrewd insights and comments on the social, economic and political trends of the times, and his notes and memoranda which are a mine of information on estate administration.

The accounting system from 1840 at once reflects the new policy. Estate journals were introduced, together with monthly abstracts of receipts and payments and monthly balance statements. The system of monthly estimates and statements became even more elaborate in the 1860's. In 1850 the estate cash books were separated from the rentals, and statements in detail of repairs and improvements began in 1866 as a result of the Duke's programme of investment in permanent improvements. More detailed accounting was required from each department of the Establishment, especially the store yard and the Park Farm, and monthly returns, abstracts and statements were introduced. The north and south Beds. woods were amalgamated for accounting purposes (produce accounts) and Chenies was added in 1858. The Woods cash-books were made entirely separate from other departments of the Establishment; woods legers begin in 1841 and monthly and annual abstracts in the 1860's. Where a series started by Adam continued, the layout was changed so that a detailed breakdown of the accounts could be achieved. [see diagrams]. The House Steward was required to sent returns of the number of persons dining at the Abbey, and the amount of food and drink consumed. In fact the Duke's passion for statistics was so great - how many fires had been lighted at the Abbey, how many flues had been swept - that the house steward, John Palfreyman complained that all these queries together with

the new system of accounts made him feel "low and nervous." As a result of these measures there was a reform in the system of household accounts and expenditure was reduced. The Duke had none of his predecessors' interest in collecting, and this was the end of the era of aristocratic connoisseurship. He also reduced the menagerie and limited expenditure on the gardens and hot-houses. By such means the estates were entirely freed from debt by the mid-1850's, yet the only lands sold were some outlying portions of little value such as Eaton Socon.

The surplus income of the estate was invested in permanent improvements. The 1840's saw the introduction of drain pipes, artificial fertilizer and cheaper building materials. The railways also helped to lower costs. Here again the Duke made personal enquiry into such matters as the best way of felling timber, and this was a period a great expansion of the store yard. The Duke was determined to set up workshops for the construction of every article required on the estate, and Sir Robert Peel, visiting the Abbey in 1849 commented that the store yard "in which materials for buildings are prepared is more like a Dock Yard than a domestic office." About 100 workmen were employed under a resident engineer; system driven machinery was introduced for sawing wood, and the workshops included besides the timber yard, a foundry, a smithy, a carpenter's shop, and sections for plumbing, glazing and painting. Windows, doors etc. for cottages and farmhouses were made to standard sizes. Good, substantial farmhouses and buildings were provided, and 374 cottages built. Drainage works were undertaken on an extensive scale on the heavier clay soils. The Duke was not alone among great landowners in pursuing this policy of heavy investment in permanent improvements. The period between 1846 and 1872 was one of prosperity for agriculture. No foreign competition was felt for thirty years after the repeal of the Corn Laws, and a rapidly expanding population provided an ever-growing home market. It was part of the Free Trade philosophy that competition would stimulate agricultural prosperity by forcing the more backward sections of the industry into greater efficiency especially by the diffusion of improved technology. Sir Robert Peel sweetened the pill of repeal by reducing duties on such items as oil cake and clover seed, and the government offered £2,000,000 in loans for drainage. There was not only the fear that landlords who did not improve their estates would not be able to attract the right type of tenant, but in an era of high prices, it was a reasonable assumption that heavy investment in improvements would result in increased rentals as prosperity and efficiency grew. But the Duke, in spite of his thriftiness, was not acting from purely 'commercial' motives. He declared "To improve the dwellings of the labouring class, and afford them the means of greater cleanliness, health, and comfort in their own homes, to extend education, and thus raise the social and moral habits of those most valuable members of the community, are among the first duties, and ought to be among the truest pleasures, of every landlord." If his investment brought him the low return of 2½%, and if his activities seem to be inconsistent from a businessman's point of view, this is because he was in the tradition of the House of Russell - a leader of agricultural progress, exercising a benevolent paternalism which took into account the duties as well as the rights of his position. Schools were built at the Duke's expense in central positions for two or three adjoining parishes, and in most parishes infant schools were established. The Duke subscribed to all of these as well as to Sunday school, and the General Account is an interesting record of enlightened landlordism. His inconsistency is particularly clear in the matter of building and letting cottages. Instead of being let with farms to provide labour, they were kept in hand and let at uneconomic rents. In addition, allotments were provided

close to the cottages. James Caird remarked in *English Agriculture in 1850-1* that the farm buildings were hardly models of economy, though there was perhaps more justification for the policy here since it was Haedy's intention, once the buildings were in good order, to shift the burden of repairs on to the tenants.

The Duke told Haedy that he was not of the old school of landowners for whom agriculture was an expensive hobby, and he seems at first to have expected that the Park Farm should pay its way. It is doubtful whether this was achieved; From 1849-1851 he gave facilities to Lawes and Gilbert to conduct experiments in fattening oxen, and placed the resources of the Park Farm at their disposal.

In keeping with the economic theories of the times, the earlier Dukes had favoured long leases and fixed rents. At the 1822 valuation, the farms were let for 14 years, but the agricultural depression which continued until the late 30's led to continual applications for rebates. In 1837 the leases were shortened to seven years, and the rents were fixed at a lower level because of the continuing depression. When the leases came up for renewal in 1843, the Corn Law repeal agitation was at its height, and farmers and landlords feared the possible consequences on grain prices, so the tenants were given an alternative of long leases of 12, 16 or 20 years, subject to revision every 4 years according to the price of corn, or short leases of 7-8 years with fixed rents. They were encouraged to choose the former, which the majority did. In 1859 the corn rent plan was modified - half being fixed, and half corn rent.

Thomas Bennett's *Brief Review* of the management of the Beds. and Bucks. estates follows in full because of the interest and value of his figures and observations on their management from 1831 - 1869.

### **Beds & Bucks Estates**

#### A Brief Review of their Management from 1 January 1831 - 31 Dec. 1868

By Thomas Bennett, Steward. R4/39, 40

Mr. Joseph Tween was Land Steward from 1822 till after the Collection of the rents due Mich. 1830.

I came to Woburn on the 5th October, to make myself acquainted with the Estates, but my duties did not formally commence till 1 January 1831

#### The Woburn Estate

The soil of this estate varies very considerably viz. from the light blowing sands of Woburn and Ampthill Ridge, or, High Ground, to the rich and strong land in the upper or western fall of the vale of Bedford, with all sorts of intermediate soils, but which are for the most part a thin top soil of strong clay with large portions of what is locally named "Wood Land Soil", from its darker colour, containing more vegetable matter, and not having been so long under cultivation as the major part of the arable lands, but the whole of this land where it is off the sand hills is resting upon a strong clay subsoil, intermixed with chalk stones.

Upon most of the sand hills, plots of marl clay crop out, and the application of this to the sand lands, after repeated heavy dressings has materially changed their character,



by adding strength to the staple, and with good farming these light lands produce excellent crops of roots, which being fed off with sheep, also consuming cake, or corn along with the roots, and then are followed by crops of barley, artificial grasses and wheat in the four course rotation, and in seasons of average moisture are for the most part grateful for generous treatment and make abundant return of produce.

The clay lands are for the most part well thorough drained and bear good crops of wheat, beans etc; they are cultivated also on the four course or alternate system of cropping, that is white & green crops and never taking two white crops in succession.

The part of the estate in Houghton Regis approaches the chalk ridge and is of a different character, the gravel on the upland part as also the clay in the vale between the hills, both rest upon chalk.

The estate in 1831 contained	14,995 ac 3r 14p
Of which there were In Hand	4,784 2 2
Viz. Woburn Park, the Farm, Woods & plantations within, also Water Meadows, The Hundreds & Prisley Farms, Woods and plantations without the Park together with roads & waste	
Total let	10,211a. 1r. 12p.
Gross rental	£14,121 11

This including the house property in Woburn Town was an average of about 27/6 per acre.

The arrears of rent at this time amounted to £2607 7s 5

As may be supposed from this large arrear the pecuniary condition of the tenantry was in a very unsatisfactory state, several approaching insolvency and some actually so, as for instance Edward Tween, Lewsey Farm, 340 acres, had paid no rent for three years. J & T. Bachelor, Lidlington Boughton End, 140 acres, the same. T Cook, Eversholt Wakes End, two years rent, while Edward Harley at Libersey, Maulden, had been sold up at Michs. 1830. This farm was without a tenant for half a year, no one would occupy it at the rent, only 16/- an acre, and to avoid taking it in hand to farm it was let at 12/- an acre, a reduction of 25%, at which rent it remained for several years, and is now occupied by Thos. Negus, and has all been drained and the rent now is £124 for 126 acres, close upon 20/- an acre.

Tween, and the Bachelors were got rid of, Cook was tried on for a few years, but had at length to make way for a better man. In some cases where the arrears were not so large, and there were signs of energy and improvement, the arrears were cancelled, and some recovered themselves and got over their difficulties.

Although the farms had been re-valued and re-let in 1822, a time of low prices, for a term of 14 years, there was great and general discontent and dissatisfaction among the tenant farmers, more especially among the older people who had farmed during the whole or better part of the Peninsular War, and who had enjoyed the high prices in the

first 20 years of this century. Mens minds had not settled down, and they could not realise the idea that they had to live and to farm under such altered circumstances.

The political world was also in a very disturbed state, and from the maladministration of the Poor Laws and other causes, there was equal discontent and disaffection among the labouring classes; then commenced a series of incendiary fires, burning down farm homestalls, and rick yards, also bodies of men assembling to break thrashing machines in open day. All things combined, the Midland and Southern counties had very gloomy prospects before them at that time, and therefore the continual and repeated demands made upon the landlords for abatement of rents by the tenants was not much to be wondered at.

The farm buildings were for the most part very ill managed and afforded little accommodation for the requirements of improved farming and management of stock; for the most part they were built of most perishable materials, wood covered with thatch.

The labourers' cottages were of a most inferior description, the walls were brick-nogged or "post and pan", or else stud & lath & plaster, and generally covered with thatch; gardens to cottages were exceptional and then very small, and of little help to a family. The allotment system had, at Oakley, been introduced in a small way a few years before but on a general plan it was only commenced at Maulden in 1829 when about 20 acres were laid out. In the year 1831-2, allotments were made general over the estate; the labourers found great benefit and it was the first amelioration of their condition.

On the farms, the inclosures were generally very small with large wide hedgerows, and a good deal of timber, with spreading heads, which were most injurious to all crops, and not consistent with good husbandry. To a great extent these were grubbed up and new and straight fences to fields of extent suitable to the size of the farms were made.

Advantage was taken of the necessary changes of tenants to divide and consolidate some of the smaller farms, when it could be arranged with convenience and also with regard to economy in rebuilding farms as well as for the purpose of attracting men of more capital and of a better class to come upon the estate.

After the passing of the amended Poor Law in 1834-5, great exertions were made to provide beneficial work for the employment of the labourers, and to allay their excitement: the allotment system now proved its value by showing the men they had been cared for in part, and it stood us in good stead. Farmers began to see their way better, and found it to their advantage to pay more wages for productive labour, rather than to pay the overseers for what was unproductive, and though prices of wheat were low, there were good crops, other produce sold well, and poor rates began to be reduced, so also after the political excitement of the Reform Act, 1832, passed over, the attention of the Legislature was directed to many laws tending to the amelioration of the people, which previously had been neglected, the want of which had caused much discontent. Capitalists became more confident and turned their attention to the development of industrial works.

The Tithe Commutation Act was passed in 1836, and this gave a great impulse to labour. Landowners at once saw the benefit of draining and bringing into cultivation a large extent of the wet and inferior grass lands on their estates, and encouraged their tenants to do so, thereby causing a demand for labour and also adding most materially to the food producing power of the country.

After the passing of the London and Birmingham Railway Act and their works commenced, an immense amount of labour of all sorts was required in the district through which it passed, and as this was followed by various extensions and branches, as also by the different main lines, and their branches which in a few years spread their network all over the kingdom, the demand for labour was universal, so that the words "surplus labour" became an unheard of term from then till 1866, a period of 30 years of unexampled prosperity for the labourer. But with the financial collapse of 1866, there has been an almost total cessation of great works, and the consequences are that a large number of hands who had been thus employed are now thrown back upon their parishes and the pressure on the Poor Law authorities is now as bad as ever it was previous to 1834.

Added to this is the loss of earnings by young women and children by the falling off of the straw plait trade which was their industrial occupation in large portions of the counties of Beds. Bucks. & Herts.

Many evils have undoubtedly arisen out of this kind of employment, and eventually it is to be hoped the failure will prove beneficial to the class by turning their attention to other modes of earning a living, but like all sudden changes, the present fashion which has set against the use of straw bonnets has been attended with much distress to those engaged in its manufacture.

About the year 1838 the Royal Agricultural Society was formed. This gave another impulse to agriculture.

First, by the publication of their Journal of Prize Essays on various subjects by practical and scientific men. Among these may be named Mr. Parker's essays on deep draining, which directed the attention of all inquiring minds to the subject, and subsequent practice has fully proved the correctness of his reasoning of the benefit of deep drains over shallow drains, which was the universal practice previously.

Second, by the establishment of annual meetings, the first of which was held in Oxford in 1839. Manufacturers of agricultural implements have met in open competition, the result has been a most extraordinary improvement in all the old implements and the introduction of many new ones as draining, tile and brickmaking machines, portable steam engines for thrashing machines and other farm work, also for the cultivation of the soil which has been successfully used since 1856 but has not made very general progress, owing to the first cost which is beyond the means of small capitalists and prohibits the general use, although upon a large arable farm, whereon it has been used, it is found to be a most useful adjunct more especially on strong clay lands where horse power is so expensive.

Before the expiration of the agreements in 1836 a careful valuation was made of every farm. The alteration of the Poor Law had been long enough tested to give the farmers

perfect assurance of its benefits; the average price of wheat in 1835 had gone down to 39/4, the lowest ever known in this century. A strong feeling took hold of their minds and of those who wrote on the subject in farming newspapers and magazines etc. that wheat had gone permanently down and would never again rise above 40/- so much so a most determined set was made by some of the leading men to beat down rents unfairly, but believing the corn prices were exceptional and not permanent, the Duke of Bedford would not tie up his lands for fourteen years as had been the practice, but would only let at reduced rent for seven years, trusting that in that period a recovery would take place, and that the future prospects of farmers would become more promising. The farms were then let for seven years at a reduction of about 10% below the value of 1822.

At the next letting in 1843, the rents were increased, but at that time the attack upon the Corn Laws and protection duties were becoming more frequent and the Duke of Bedford, being under the impression that sooner or later the Corn Laws would be repealed, introduced a plan of corn rents and agreements for 16 years were offered to those tenants who chose to accept them, and to those who preferred fixed rents, 7 years agreements were given - the larger portion of the tenants accepted the agreements for the longer term on the variable system.

Although there was considerable variation in the 16 years, the average proved to be as near the pivot rent as could be, showing a small advantage in favour of the landlord.

In 1859 there was another valuation and re-letting. The Corn Laws having been repealed in 1846, the former plan of entire corn rent was modified, the half being fixed, and the half only variable. These agreements will expire in 1875; probably there may never again be an occasion or need to resort to other than a fixed rent, but during the first mentioned 16 years which was partly a state of transition, the farmers' minds on the question of rent, were kept quiet, as they felt both their landlord and themselves must fall or rise together, the plan has been attended with general satisfaction.

In the year 1843, the Duke of Bedford discontinued the occupation of two outlying farms which had been held with Park Farm for very many years viz. Prislely Farm in the parish of Flitwick was let to H. Platt, and the Hundreds Farm in Woburn was let to Mr. W. Gilbert. At the same time about 200 acres was taken out of the open Park and cultivated with Crawley Heath Farm.

Charles Burness was then bailiff; he died in 1847 and was succeeded by G.W. Baker in 1848, who remained until 1859 when he went to Lord Scarsdale. Baker was succeeded by John Coleman from Holkham, and at this time the Woburn Meadows were let off to Mr. Gascoyen of Birchmoor Farm. Coleman left in 1866 and in that and the following year, Crawley Heath Farm was all laid off to grass and the portion which had been taken from the open Park in 1843 was restored again.

At Michs. 1865, Mr. C. Stephenson came to assist me as Sub-Agent and on 1 Jan. 1869 he entered upon the duties of Steward of the Beds & Bucks Estates.

By the introduction of new tenants, and from the improved circumstances of others, as well as by the progressive rebuilding of farm houses and home stalls, and labourers'

cottages, as also by draining and raising new quickset hedges the Estate wears a very different aspect (to those who remember) to what it did in 1830, notwithstanding so much yet remains to be done.

The Estate has been very much enlarged by frequent and very considerable purchases.

It now contains	22136a. 0r. 30p.
Of which there is in hand	4309a. 0r. 11p.
Total let	17827a. 0r 19p
Rental Mich. 1868	£29,187a 3s 8d
Average per acre includeing house property	32/10
Increase from 1830	5/4
Arrears Mich 1868	£106/11/10

The following estates have been purchased:

<u>Year Description</u>	<u>quantity acres</u>
1832 The Ridgmont Park estate	about 467
1834 Eversholt, Copmore Close & Lawyers Hill	10
1839 The Advowson of Eversholt & the Manor of Steppingley with its members	
1840 The Crown Estate in Steppingley	48
1841 Ampthill Estate	3730
1842 Steppingley, Mr. Lindsell's estate	247
1844 Magpie Hall, Marston & Wootton	75
1844 Redlands, Marston	22
1844 Millbrook Estate Bates	7
1848 Millbrook Chapmans	18
1848 Lidlington Wright	7
1849 Lidlington W. Platt's house & land	8
1849 Millbrook Tanqueray, Lye Mead	50
1850 Lidlington Boughton End H. Platt's exors	202
1850 Millbrook Wheeler	5
1850 Crawley & Woburn Rock	13
1852 Millbrook Butcher	20
1853 Maulden Kempson & Abbott	48
1853 Houghton Regis Rye Close	4
1854 Houghton Conquest Spring	18
1854 Potsgrove Lovelsbury (Sir. R. Inglis)	80
1854 Eversholt Hay Hedges recd. in exchange	10
Eversholt Mill Close given to Daniel	10
1855 Steppingley Dan. Cook Clay pit	4
1856 Houghton Conquest Robinson	10
1857 Brogborough Park D. Radcliffe Esq.	591
1857 Steppingley Arnold	9
1859 Marston Moat Atkinson	210
1859 Marston Moat Church Barton	157
1859 Marston Moat Morris	8
1859 Lidlington Cooke	9
1860 Crawley & Eversholt Morris	17
1860 Milton Bryan Cook	141
1860 Lidlington Poulton	8
1860 Lidlington & Ampthill Whitehurst	15

1863 Lidlington Common Odells	191
1863 Lidlington Common Freeman	10
1863 Lidlington Common Gurney	9
1863 Marston Gardner	27
1863 Eversholt W. Green	58
1864 Marston Mundy	11
1864 Woburn Reddall's house etc.	3
1865 Lidlington Leach	38
1865 Marston Bennett	40
1865 Aspley Heath Whitlock, Church site	2
1866 Tingrith Major Cooper	17
1866 Aspley & Eversholt	7
1867 Eversholt & Ridgmont Norris	19
1868 Woburn Wheatsheaf Freeman	4
	6694

The following estates were sold:

1839 Manor of Cranfiled, & farm	57
1846 sales to L & NW Railway Bedford & Bletchley branch	13
1847 Houghton Regis sale to H. Brandreth Esq.	17
1864 sale to Midland Railway, extension to London	21
1866 sale to Midland Railway, additional land	9½
1867 sale to Midland Railway, to Ampthill station	½
	118

#### The Bedford Estate

The soil of this estate is variable. In the vale of the Ouse, the flat lands at Cople, Willington and Goldington near to the river, have a fair proportion of useful meadow land. The arable is a good gravelly soil well adapted for turnips and barley. As it recedes from the river it is more of a loam, getting stronger as it approaches the higher ground on the southern portion of Cople and Willington, and the northern part of Goldington where the clay is strong, and of a similar character to the other high lying lands.

At Oakley the vale is not so wide and the nature of the soil is gravel and loam resting upon limestone rock.

At Clapham, Thurleigh, Knotting and Souldrop the land all lies high. It is generally a thin staple clay, and some parts of the wood land soil, all resting on strong clay, more or less mixed with chalk stone.

The total quantity was	12258a 3r 35p	
Woodlands in hand, with river roads and waste	1103a 3r 15p	
Total let		11155a 0r 20p
Rental		£13,471 3s 10d
Including house property the average was about 24/- an acre		
The amount of arrears due were		£2307 18s 4d

The same observations as to the condition of several of the Woburn tenants applied to this estate, especially to the tenants occupying the clay land farms in Clapham, Eaton Socon (Tithe Farm), Goldington, Souldrop, Thurleigh and Wilden. These farms were

for the most part undrained, or imperfectly drained, and the wet season of 1828 had rotted out their sheep, and the tenants were unable to replace their flocks.

The following is a state of their condition:

Tenants	Parishes	Extent	Rental	Arrears
2	Clapham	380	280	190
1	Eaton Socon, Tithe Farm	424	450	314
2	Goldington	130	160	262
2	Souldrop	490	370	218
2	Thurleigh	550	450	615
1	Wilden	268	260	520
	Various small arrears			188
10		2242	1970	2307

Wilden had been in hand for two or three years. It was then let to Fletcher who held it two years, paid no rent, and at last, after thrashing and selling his crop and stock, was helped by his neighbours to leave the country and cheat his landlord. The farm was then let at 10/- an acre to avoid the risk of farming it again.

Upper Honeydon Farm had also been in hand for two years and was now let at a much reduced rent. The real fact was that people who had any property could with difficulty be induced to occupy these sort of farms in those times except at very much reduced rents.

The following estates were purchased:

1832 A piece of meadow at Honeydon, E. Socon.	acres 7
1838 Mr. Cook's estate, Bedford	3
1840 Stevington Tithe Farm which was bought by the Marquis of Tavistock from Lord Spencer now came into rental	284
1842 Earl Ludlow's Cope freehold (by will)	3
1843 Oakley Stonepit	1
1849 Clapham Little Wood Farm, Sharmans	56
1849 Goldington Greens Close in Castle Mill	12
1849 Stevington Nash	13
1851 Stevington Whitworth	6
1860 Goldington Dolling's estate	124
1864 Cardington Bedford and Cambridge surplus land	2
1864 Goldington Richardson & Kilpin	2
1865 Goldington Hinton	7
1865 Northill next to Sheer Hatch	1
1866 Goldington Newnham Wall Closes	24
1867 Goldington Peck's Close, Castle Mills	4
1867 Oakley Champion	2
	551

The following estates were sold:

1841 Bedford town sales: house property and building land	acres 5
1842 Riseley estate to Lord St. John	310
1843 Eaton Socon Estate to J.H. Day Esq.	1555
1845 Wilden estate & advowson to the Revd. W.J. Chalk	268
1845 Bedford St. Leonards severance land to L & NW railway	5
1847 Bedford St. Leonards severance land to L & NW railway	12

1848 Bedford St. Leonards severance land to L & NW railway	11	
1852 Souldrop Stonepit Close to Admiral Gambier an old exchange to Lee Antonie Esq.	2	
1854 Leicester & Hitchin Rail, severance	25	
1856 Bedford St. Peter's Militia Depot	3	
1857 Leicester & Hitchin, to form Britannia Road	2	
1862 Bedford & Cambridge railway	18	
1866 Midland extension to London		20p
1867 Middle Class School, Kempston	20	
1868 Bedford town sale, & Newnham	4	

After the purchases and sales:

The estate now contains	10,757a 2r 8p	
Woodlands in hand with river, roads and waste	582a 2r 13p	
Total let		10,174a 3r 35p
Rental 1868		£15390 4s 0d
Amount of arrears	£217 18 8	
Average per acre	30/3	
Increase from 1830	6/3	

In 1847 the Duke gave up the occupation of West Field Farm, Oakley, which with the Fillands and Paddock next Oakley House were let to Mr. Horrell and Stevington Lodge Farm, with the Park were let to Mr. W. Pike.

In 1867 the Town of Bedford under the Local Government Act, made a complete drainage of the town, with the water works etc. and in order to utilise the sewerage, the local Board hired from the Duke a part of Dolling's Farm at Goldington, 54 acres, which they have laid out for irrigation and to grow Italian rye grass for green crop for sale.

The Duke of Bedford also sold a slipe of ground off the garden of the Swan Hotel and granted permission to make a road from the forecourt of the Swan Hotel to the river to open a public road alongside of the river to join the road to Newnham and Goldington In 1861 the Land Tax upon this estate was redeemed.



## Chenies Estate, Bucks

The soil of this estate does not vary much. For the most part it consists of a hungry gravel mixed with flints, and resting upon chalk. There are some meadows next the River Chess, which are black peat upon gravel and chalk. The arable land between the river and the bottom of the hill (but which is of small extent) is of deeper staple with more flints and less gravel than any of the upland.

The estate comprises nearly the whole of the parish, and runs into the adjoining parishes of Chalfont St. Giles and Chalfont St. Peters in Bucks., and into Falunden, Rickmansworth and Sarratt in the county of Herts.

The total quantity in 1831 was	2029a 1r 10p		
The beech woods in hand with water, roads & common land	410a 2r 15p		
Total let		1618a 2r 25p	
Rental			£2,200 0 0
Average per acre including houses	27/-		
Amount of arrears	£506 18s 10d		

Green Street Farm and other lands together 284 acres were unoccupied. I was then compelled to cultivate and crop the lands until a tenant was found in the spring of 1832. From this fact and the amount of arrears, the condition of the tenantry was much the same (or worse perhaps) as in Beds.

In the year 1832, the tenants most in arrears were changed and the rental was reduced to £1990.

At that time there were several paper mills upon the River Chess, although trade is now much fallen off, so long as the trade existed it afforded considerable employment to females, but it was not attended with much benefit to an agricultural district, for when the trade became slack, and eventually ceased there was much distress. The parish of Chenies felt this, as Mr. Dodd who held a long lease of a mill died insolvent. The mill stood idle for some time as no one in the trade came forward to take the lease, it was at last sold to the Duke who pulled down the paper mill, leaving only a small corn and grist mill which was part of the lease-hold estate.

In 1838 the tithes were commuted and by a new survey the estate was found to contain 2044 acres.

In 1842 there was an exchange of lands with the Hon. C.C. Cavendish (afterwards Lord Chesham)

The Duke gave Dell Farm House, buildings and land 14ac 3r near to the approach to Latimer, and received 32ac 1r 17p land lying between the Sheep House and Old House Farm.

In 1849 a piece of meadow land at Sarratt, about 5 acres, was purchased from E. Morris Esq. In 1855 arable land containing 35ac 2r 27p in Chenies belonging to

Morris was also purchased. In 1860 the unexpired term of lease of Mr. Hyde's house was purchased. In 1861 the Land Tax was redeemed.

In 1868 the total quantity is	2103a 3r 19p	
In hand, Beech woods etc	377a 2r 13p	
Total let		1726a. 1r. 6p.
Rental		£2,416 10s 8d
Amount of arrears	£1 12s 0d	
Average per acre rent	28/-	
Increase from 1831	1/-	

This estate shows little or no improvement on the value previous to 1831, nor will it ever do much more, for it is naturally a hungry and ungrateful soil, and does not make such a return as to tempt men to farm it very highly.

### 1872 – 1953

The 8th Duke, William, was prevented by ill health from exercising any personal supervision of the estate. This was left to his cousin, Hastings, who succeeded him as 9th Duke in 1872. He, in effect, continued the policy of the 7th Duke. An ardent agriculturalist, he became President of the Royal Agricultural Society, and took pains to keep the latest developments in agricultural techniques. The Woburn Experimental Farm was founded in 1876 and it has been estimated that the experiments carried on there cost £1,000 a year. Silage experiments were instituted at Crawley Heath Farm, and a Jersey herd built up at Park Farm. He also continued the tradition of benevolent paternalism towards tenants and labourers on the estate. He was strongly supported of the School Board system, and 24 schools were made over by him at nominal rents to the Boards. He also continued to support church restoration, and the new church at Woburn designed by Clutton was the result of his efforts. Care was taken to provide garden allotments for labourers, and the scale of building continued much as before. In 1875 a representative of the firm which managed the estates of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Crown Estates was asked to make a report as to "Whether the continuance of the attempt to keep down the decay upon the Bedford Estates is expedient." After surveying the nature and cost of the building and repair programme since 1840, he criticised it as uneconomic. Referring to cottage building he remarked "from time to time these...have been altered, and many new schemes for the health and enjoyment of the labouring population have been tried at considerable cost. On the Woburn estate I am told there are 1,000 cottages." He pointed out that few of these were let with the farms for which they were intended to supply labour, and necessitated a very large expenditure in repairs, and in alterations for sanitary purposes, and went on to say that the present Duke and his two predecessors "no doubt desired to restore and improve this fine property up to a condition worthy of the rank of the Dukes of Bedford, and to provide fully for the requirements of modern agriculture, also to provide what were deemed suitable residences for the labourers and others employed on the property. It will probably be scarcely questioned that the outlay made on these works including the building and repair of schools, the repair of churches and other similar outlay has been considerably in excess of what may be called the "commercial" necessities of the estates. I mean by this word the outlay necessary for the profitable occupation of the land." Turning to the tenant farmers, he noted that the Dukes had not only constructed new farmhouses and buildings without receiving any substantial increase in rent for the outlay, but also did every sort of

repair and maintenance, and concluded "there can be little doubt that Your Grace's net income would be greatly increased if the system of leases were continued, and the cost of repairs thrown on the tenant, the rent of course being based on this principle...The present system of doing the whole work of maintenance with the necessary staff in London and the country to watch and check the detailed expenditure involved in the employment of 500 mechanics, with all the returns, vouchers, checks and counter-checks required is a great loss of power." If the burden of repair were to be thrown on the tenants "I would suggest that minuteness of detail should not be carried to the extent to which it now appears to be; it adds most seriously to the necessary cost of repair works, and takes up the time of the local agent, which might...be more profitably employed." Of the present system, he thinks it "about the most expensive that can be devised. The Agent's energies should be directed to seeing that the tenants keep up the premises in fair and workable condition, and not in looking after an army of mechanics and others whom he cannot effectually control. I think it is the system and not the means by which that system has been carried out which has led to a larger outlay being made than would under other circumstances have been found necessary for the proper maintenance and profitable occupation of the Bedford estates." He concluded that commercial management had largely been lost sight of in maintaining the Bedford estates in much better order than neighbouring estates, in keeping with the Duke's position in society; "I need scarcely say that I think probably the first mentioned considerations have been too much lost sight of in the second to warrant the expectation of a profitable money result." In 1876 the farms were revalued by Messrs. Clutton and Stephenson and let on yearly tenancies at higher rents - an increase of the rental by about 18%. But whatever hopes the Duke and his agents may still have had of recouping the initial extremely heavy investment through increased rents were ended by the Great Depression which began in 1878-9. The drastic fall in agricultural prices meant that the greater part of this investment was lost permanently. Inbred conservatism, the belief that this was only a 'temporary' depression like that of the 1830's, and the masking effects of poor harvests resulting from bad weather 1879-1885, retarded the conversion of arable to pasture, and from cereal production to mixed farming or livestock raising which was to prove the only way in which the farmers, especially those on heavy clay soils could survive. Both the farmers and the landlord therefore suffered more than was logically necessary in strictly economic terms.

The effect of the depression was a revision of the rental by Messrs. Beadel, Fenning and Benson between 1879 and 1882, resulting in a reduction of rents. Until the next revaluation in 1895, the tenants were met by yearly remissions of rent:

Remissions to Michaelmas 1879 50%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1880 25%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1881 25%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1882 10%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1883 -  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1884 -  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1885 50%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1886 12½%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1887 50%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1888 30%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1889 12½%  
 Remissions to Michaelmas 1890 25%

Remissions to Michaelmas 1891 12½%  
Remissions to Michaelmas 1892 20%  
Remissions to Michaelmas 1893 37½%  
Remissions to Michaelmas 1894 50%  
Remissions to Michaelmas 1895 50%  
Average for 17 years: 27%

These remissions were not purely the product of altruism on the part of the landlord. The cost of taking many of the farms in hand and providing the working capital would have been prohibitive. The second series of "Farms in Hand" cash books and statements (1879-96) shows the outlay involved on the relatively few farms that it was found necessary to take in hand. Much expenditure was necessary to clean land which tenant farmers had insufficient capital to keep in a satisfactory state of cultivation. Nevertheless, the 9th Duke and the 11th Duke both upheld the tradition of benevolent landlordism, and reporting in 1896, Messrs Little and Hall said, "We are extremely glad to say that only one farm, the Willington Hill Farm of 319 acres...was in hand, a fact for congratulation, (when thousands of acres in the country cannot be let at all) and which no doubt is entirely due to the liberal way in which the tenants have been met, and the manner in which the farms have been equipped and maintained by the landlord."

On the general administration of the estate they had the following observations to make: "The greater part of the arable land is most suited to corn growing, but since that has become so unremunerative, we find a considerable area has been laid down to grass." But at that time the techniques of sowing good permanent pasture were poorly understood, so the results had not been so good as might have been expected, though they agreed that "the laying down of pasture seems to be the only way of disposing of such land." Mixed farming had been most successful, but this needed smaller farms and more buildings which was costly for the landlord, and in many cases the situation of the farm was such that reduction in size was difficult. However, they felt that on the Beds, and Bucks. Estate "there are none so large as to be unwieldy." They reported that "the tenants as a whole, are a very respectable class, several of them being men of capital and resources, doing credit to themselves and their landlord in the uphill battle against low prices and foreign competition which agriculturalists are at present fighting, but there was generally a profound feeling of despondency as to the future and in several instances statements were volunteered to us by individual farmers as to the loss of the greater part of their capital...We regret to report that in too many instances, we found the land in anything but a satisfactory state of cultivation the chief cause being the lack of sufficient capital...On many occupations the number of livestock is far below that which might be kept on the holding and the quality of the stock too frequently is inferior and this may be attributed to depletion of capital by serious and continuous losses. The unfortunate result of having an insufficient and inferior head of livestock is that the tenants profits suffer further decrease and the land becomes impoverished...The fences and ditches are almost without exception in a very bad condition which is probably due to the avoidance by the tenants of all but compulsory expenditure." By 1895, with the growth of industry and migration from the land, farmers were experiencing a new phenomenon - shortage of skilled labour: "Labour is not too plentiful in some districts, but the chief complaint is the difficulty of obtaining skilled labour and stock attendants, there being a growing aversion amongst the labouring classes to long hours and Sunday work which the latter

entails." Even after the 1895 revaluation they warned that further remissions would probably be necessary: "Owing to the prolonged depression, farmers are unfortunately not so able to withstand the strain of bad seasons, as they were formerly when high prices made up to some extent for deficient crops and we fear it will require several years of real prosperity before tenant farmers are able to replace their lost capital, and so withstand the effects of a bad year."

The 11th Duke, Herbrand, and R.E. Prothero [Lord Ernle] who became Agent in Chief in 1898 were both epitomes of attitudes and of a social system which finally came to an end under the impact of the Great Depression and of the First World War: the "beneficently enlightened landowner ruling over a little sovereign commonwealth peopled by his dependents." Prothero's ideal was the benevolent paternalism exercised throughout the nineteenth century by the Dukes of Bedford, yet economic and social change - the depression, the secret ballot and enlarged electorate, industrialization, the first statutory interference with contracts between landlord and tenant in 1883, and the determination in many quarters to end the political and social domination exercised by the territorial aristocracy-"all pointed to an early and inescapable redefinition of the social function of the land and its owners." The 11th Duke also had no understanding of the dynamics of industrial society. In 1897 he published *The Story of a Great Agricultural Estate* to prove "that the system of land tenure which allows a great estate to descend unimpaired from one generation to another, secures to those dwelling on the soil material and moral advantages greater than any that are promised under any alternative system." He had a horror of "class legislation which scares capital from the land" and "behind which looms the ominous prospect of confiscation." Prothero made Oakley his country house, soon became prominent in public life in the county, and during this period wrote *English Farming Past and Present*, published in 1912. Yet the acreage of the Bedford estate was already dwindling fast; sales of land reduced it by half in ten years, and in 1918 the Oakley, Houghton Conquest, and Maston & Lidlington parts of the estate were sold. The death of the 12th Duke in 1953 when the death duties amounted to £5,000,000 led to a further series of sales of outlying property - the Great Maytham estate in Kent, and the Chenies estate - as well as Bedfordshire farms, cottages and building land. The 12th Duke was also responsible for demolishing much of the Abbey.

This magnificent series of account books, reports, papers and correspondence give an unrivaled insight into the development of the administration of a great estate and into a unique social system which has completely disappeared.