Bedfordshire is a small county that does not clearly belong to any major region. It is bordered to the south by the home counties of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, to the north and east by the East Anglian counties of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, and to the north-west by the Midland county of Northamptonshire.

The only ancient borough is the county town of Bedford, where inspection of weights and measures was traditionally combined with the county. In the middle of the nineteenth century the market towns of Dunstable and Luton became municipal boroughs. Dunstable remained fairly small and ceased to be a Weights and Measures Authority in 1889, but in the twentieth century Luton grew into a large industrial town, with its own university and airport.

The origins of the trade in Bedfordshire can be traced back to the Kilpin family, ironmongers of Bedford. Various members of the family were appointed as examiners for the county under the Act of 1795, keepers of the county standards in 1826, and inspectors for the county and the borough of Bedford in 1834/5. They were superseded as inspectors in 1836, but the family firm continued to have responsibility for maintaining the county standards until at least 1859. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that a specialist scale maker appeared in the county, John Franks moving north from Watford in Hertfordshire to Luton. Soon afterwards the Avery empire spread to Bedford and Luton.
## A: Inspection by the County of Bedfordshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Before 1825 examiners were appointed for the hundreds.</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 hundreds: Stodden, Barford, Willeys, Redbornestoke, Wixamtree, Biggleswade, Clifton, Flitt, Manshead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>One set of standards obtained.</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>T. and B. Kilpin received the standards in 1825, and were appointed as inspectors in 1834. The ‘star-shaped’ mark is probably theirs; it has 8 or 10 rays, and may represent a spur-rowel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Inspector appointed.</td>
<td>CS</td>
<td>In 1836 the Kilpins were succeeded by Solomon Sheppard. The letter S is almost certainly his mark. He was the sole inspector until 1848, when the six superintendents of police were appointed as additional inspectors, although the county had only three sets of standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848/9</td>
<td>County police force set up.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sheppard was still in office in 1859 [Sbk] when the situation was regularised by obtaining one more set of standards and making four WM districts. He retired around this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Two more sets of standards obtained. Six superintendents of police appointed as additional inspectors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Three short sets of standards obtained. The seven police superintendents were inspectors of WM for their divisions, as listed below.</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Woburn division was combined with Leighton Buzzard.</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 2oz bronze weight marked with a crown, CB, and ‘star’, almost certainly the mark of the Kilpins of Bedford, c1834-35. The weight also bears the Founders’ marks, showing that it was originally made in London during the reign of George II (1727-1760).

A 4oz bronze weight with the mark of a crown, CB, and S, which probably signifies Solomon Sheppard, inspector for the county 1836-59. This weight was made in London in the reign of William IV (1830-1837).
Police superintendents as inspectors 1848-1890

1848 –1859: six police districts, plus civilian chief inspector

The six districts listed in 1848 [QSM] were:
1-Bedford, 2-Ampthill, 3-Biggleswade, 4-Bletsoe (Sharnbrook), 5-Luton, 6-Woburn.

Although each of the six superintendents was appointed as IWM, there were only three sets of standards, and the three inspectors that were most active were W. Graham (Sharnbrook), H. Ison Jebbett (Biggleswade), and W.R. Young (Woburn). Young was involved in an appeal case in 1850 [1].

James Bates (Ampthill) was also named as an IWM in 1850, and when Samuel Pope was appointed in Luton in 1855 he too was made an IWM.

1859-1873: four WM districts, not the same as the police districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry Hards Jebbett (1862-)</td>
<td>George Smith (-1869-73)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry R. Smith (1869-73)</td>
<td>William Shepherd (-1871-73&amp;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1874-1890: seven police districts (Woburn combined with Leighton for WM in 1877)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George James (1874-90)</td>
<td>George Smith (&amp;1874)</td>
<td>Samuel Pope (&amp;1874-77)</td>
<td>*James Carruthers (1874-81-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Kennedy (1874-81-)</td>
<td>William Bedlow (1874-81-)</td>
<td>Edmund Tydeman (1877-90)</td>
<td>Ebenezer Cain (-1890)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Quenby (-1889-90)</td>
<td>Frederick Smith (-1890)</td>
<td></td>
<td>William Shepherd (&amp;1874-77&amp;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Leighton Buzzard: W. Knight Clough (&1874-77) William Shepherd (&1877-90)

5. Luton: Samuel Pope (&1874-77) Edmund Tydeman (1877-90)

6 Sharnbrook: *James Carruthers had previously worked as IWM in Bucks.
A document found in the Bedfordshire archives, dating from c1870, possibly at the time when the four WM districts were being replaced by the seven police districts. It refers to the possibility that ‘Mr Kilpin’ had mixed up the four sets of standards in 1859.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
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<th>Marks</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1879  | Numbers 8-14 issued. | 🇬🇧 | Allocation of numbers in 1879:  
8 Ampthill  
9 Bedford  
10 Biggleswade  
11 Leighton Buzzard  
12 Luton  
13 Sharnbrook  
No. 14 was not used? In 1891  
No.9 was reallocated to Cornwall, and No.14 to Bradford. |
| 1889  | Bedfordshire CC formed. | 🇬🇧 | |
| 1891  | One qualified inspector for the whole county; at least one police officer continued. No.8 was the only number used, the other numbers being transferred or withdrawn. | 🇬🇧 | |  
Qualified inspectors:  
A.W. Poole (q1891-1916)  
A.W.H. Poole (q1899/1900, in Beds 1903-1947)  
[MR 03:301; 47:28; 58:96]  
E.K. Udy (chief 1947-72-)  
[MR 33:115; 47:3] |
| 1974  | Bedfordshire CC takes over from Bedford and Luton. | 🇬🇧 | |
A 1oz brass weight stamped with the mark of the County of Bedford, District 3. It is not clear whether this refers to the period 1859-73, when District 3 was based in Luton, or 1874-78, when it was based in Biggleswade.

An 8oz brass weight stamped with the Bedfordshire number 8, 1879-1901.
B: Localities with separate jurisdiction in the County of Bedfordshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Dates &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>AncBo MB:1835</td>
<td><em>BB</em></td>
<td>s:1831 r:1864 n:1879-1974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kilpins, a family of ironmongers, who were examiners and inspectors for the county, were appointed as inspectors for the borough in 1834. The borough had no quarter sessions from 1835 until about 1846, and from then until 1859 the county inspector Solomon Sheppard acted for the borough also [SBk]. When he retired, inspection was handed over to the respective police forces.

Richard Stennett was superintendent of the borough police force (1851-69), and he was listed as the IWM from 1860 until 1885 [K]. Apparently, he was succeeded by Arthur Poole. In 1890/1 both Poole and Alfred Merrie qualified, and Poole became inspector for the county, Merrie for the borough. In 1900/01 William Fuller qualified, and he continued until 1916. Merrie then resumed as inspector of WM, retiring in 1926. He was succeeded by E. Craven (1926-29, moved to Accrington), T.E. Cole (1929-52) [MR 67:130], and R.M. Wells (1952-74) [MR 52:47,179; 75:107].

Dunstable MB:1864 | 212 | s:1868 n:1879-1889 |

The mark represents a conical ale-muller and chain, which (by a strange combination of circumstances) became the symbol of the borough. Benjamin George was superintendent of police from 1865 to 1889. He served as IWM 1868-89 [1890 K] when the borough was disqualified, because its population was less than 10,000. After that the county inspector continued to be described as being also the inspector for the Borough of Dunstable. This must be understood to mean that the borough was within his district, not that he derived authority from the Borough Council. As late as 1950, the number 8 was listed as applying to Bedford County and the Borough of Dunstable.
The standard apothecaries weights acquired by the Borough of Bedford in 1880.

A 2oz brass weight stamped with the uniform verification number (39) assigned to the Borough of Bedford. ER 39 indicates the reign of Edward VII (1902-1910) and GR 39 indicates his successor George V (1910-1936). Strictly speaking, the latter mark should have been stamped on the back of the weight, according to the regulations in force from 1907 onwards.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Dates &amp; Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-uniform</td>
<td>Number pre-1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>Manor</td>
<td>MB:1876</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CB:1964</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1837 standards were verified for the Manor of Luton and the Hundred of Flitt, and delivered to the Steward of the Manor. It is recorded [4Rep: 37] that they were subsequently presented to the parish by the Lord of the Manor, and sold by the churchwardens in order to buy sacramental plate. (See also borough archives c1877.) No standards were in use in 1866. In 1878 new standards were issued to the Head Constable, D. Jaquest, acting on behalf of the borough. He continued to act as IWM until 1891, when A.E. Slough qualified as inspector for Luton. He was also inspector for the Borough of *St Albans* (*Herts*). He retired in 1923 [MR 23: 158] and was replaced by G.A.R. Densham, who later became chief inspector until his death in 1949 [MR 49:300]. W.E. Crouch (1935-1973) succeeded him as chief inspector in 1950 [MR 73:186].

Woburn: Standards were verified for this market town in 1851, but it is not known if any inspection was carried out. Authority had passed to the county by 1866.
A box of working standard weights used in the Weights and Measures Office in Luton. They would have been used by the inspector and his assistants on a daily basis, and regularly compared with the local standards.
C: The trade in Bedfordshire

### BEDFORD

**Kilpin**  
<1800-1870>  

*On a stack of averdepois weights with Bedford borough marks*

In 1791 [Universal British Directory] a John Kilpin was listed as an ironmonger in the High Street, and he was probably the man of that name who served as an examiner for the county until his death in 1803 [QSR]. In 1826 Thomas and Benjamin Kilpin were appointed as keepers of the county standards, and in 1834 both the county and the borough appointed them as inspectors [QSM]. They were replaced in 1836 but almost certainly continued to adjust weights. In 1867 [M] William Wells Kilpin was described as trading as an ironmonger, brassfounder, and many other things. His name has been seen on a stack of brass weights, and it is likely that he supplied and serviced the scales used by local traders.

**Avery**  
<1914-1965>  

First noted 1914 [K], at  
- 11 Midland Rd <1914-20>  
- Priory Street <1922-55>  
- 22 Cauldwell St <1955-76>

### LUTON

**Franks**  
<1903-c1908>  

*On a 4oz brass weight with Luton marks.*

John Franks, b<1873>, employed as scale maker in Watford (Herts) [1901 Census], scale maker [1903 K] at  
- 19 Castle Street <1903-05>.  
Premises occupied by Avery [1910 K].

**Avery**  
<1910-1965>  

Took over Franks premises c1910, at  
- 19 Castle Street <1910-14>  
- 30 King Street <1939>  
- 184-190 Park Street <1965>.

**Jones**  
<1939-1950>  

*Jones Bros.*, scale makers [1940 K] at  
- 46 Park St. <1939-50>.  
Gone by 1960.
Advertisement for J.M. Franks from 1905 [LY].

4oz brass weight with the name of J.M. FRANKS. The Luton verification mark ER327 has been cancelled. The word LUTON may have been part of the verification mark, rather than the mark stamped by Franks. According to the Regulations of 1907 the stamping of a maker’s name in letters larger than the denomination was illegal, and verification mark should be stamped on the reverse, so this weight can be dated to the period 1902-07.
References for Bedfordshire

Published works


Directories


Cr. Craven’s Commercial Directory of the County of Bedford etc (ST177) 1853.

C. Cassey’s Gazetteer and Directory of Bedfordshire etc (ST41) 1863.

M. Melville’s Directory of … Bedfordshire etc (ST46) 1867.

H. Harrod’s Directory of Bedfordshire etc (ST55) 1876.

BD. The Bedford Directory (ST179-182) 1866-1939.

LY. The Luton Year Book (ST184) 1904-1923.

Original documents

*Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service*

QSR. Quarter sessions rolls, vols 18-27 contain several references to WM, 1800-1826.

QSM. Minutes of quarter sessions, containing appointments of inspectors 1834-75.

QAV2. Bundle of documents relating to the inspection of weights and measures. 1825-91.

PSWM. Documents relating to WM convictions at Petty Sessions.