



Sweetland family photographs: (lower left) possibly Bletsoe looking north between church and rectory; (upper right) local girls standing in front of possibly part of wall of the Rectory garden; (upper left) possibly road at north of village looing towards North End cross-roads



Various photographs of Sweetland family, posed and out cycling

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

1911 census return for Frank, Kate and Bertha Sweetland with address at 81 Tavistock Street Bedford; occupation given as 'Photographer'

Biographical notes on the Bedford photographer Frank Sweetland (1871 - 1936)

Researched & compiled by Edward Bean, 2006.

During his short career in Bedford from 1906 to 1916, Frank Sweetland (a.k.a. Frank Sweetland Cocks), as well as being an excellent portrait photographer, took many outstanding topographical postcard views of Bedford itself and, being a keen cyclist, many of the surrounding villages, including Astwood, Bletsoe, Blunham, Bromham, Biddenham, Cardington, Carlton, Clapham, Cople, Cranfield, Eaton Socon, Elstow, Felmersham, Goldington, Great Barford, Harrold, Ickwell, Knotting, Lavendon, Marston Moretaine, Milton Ernest, Northill, Oakley, Odell, Old Warden, Pavenham, Radwell, Renhold, Riseley, Sharnbrook, Stagsden, Stevington, Thurleigh, Turvey, Wilden, and Willington; all of which are represented in my own collection.

In 1911, Sweetland with his wife and daughter resided at 81 Tavistock Street, Bedford. The census form, completed by Sweetland in his own hand, states that he was aged 40 (implying DoB 1871), and was married to Kate Bertha, nee Woodcock, in 1897. She was stated as being aged 38 (implying DoB 1873) and born at Kettering. Their only child, Bertha Irene, was stated as aged 13 (implying DoB 1898) and born in Peterborough. Frank was born in Lewisham, Kent (now the London Borough of Lewisham), and BMD records show a *Frank Sweetland Cocks* born in Lewisham in March 1871.

From BMD records, it seems that Kate Bertha, his wife, was born in September 1872 in Kettering, her maiden name being Woodcock. Kate Bertha Woodcock married Frank Sweetland Cocks at Peterborough in September 1896. Kate was employed by a furnisher and haberdasher supplying props for photographers' studios, and it seems most likely that she met Frank through her employment.

Their daughter, Bertha Irene, was born on 28th November 1897. Some records have Bertha's second name as Anne, which may be a misreading of Frank's handwriting on the 1911 census form, but family members referred to her as Irene Cocks.

In the 1891 census, Frank Sweetland Cocks (with the same date and place of birth), was shown as the third of four sons of Jonathan Cocks, a travelling seedsman, and his wife Elizabeth, living at The Ferns, Park Road, Peterborough. At that time Frank's occupation was shown as 'clerk'. The family appear to have been moderately prosperous as they employed at least one household servant. Jonathan Cocks died in 1910 at Peterborough, aged 76.

As a photographer, Frank Sweetland moved widely before settling in Bedford around 1905/6:

The April 1901 census has Frank S Cocks, Engineer's Clerk, aged 30, living in High Street, Chatteris, Cambs, with his wife Kate and daughter Bertha.

In July 1901, Frank Sweetland Cocks, of 183 Freeman Street, Grimsby, completed a Stationers Company form applying for copyright on a photograph of the *'fish docks Grimsby, showing some filled with trawlers laid up owing to the strike'*. (National Archives)

A Carte de Visité (author's collection) bears the imprint '*F Sweetland Cocks, Photographer, Lytham*' of 28 Freckleton Street, Lytham, and a copyright registration of a photograph of Green Drive, Lytham, bears the date 25 March 1903, and another of rough seas at Lytham in 1904, both now in the National Archive. However, a photograph of the Fitzwilliam Hunt at the Guildhall Peterborough is dated 10 March 1904, so he must have been an early commuter from the north west!

Kelly's Directory of 1906 lists Frank at 6 Exchange Street, Peterborough; a photographic postcard has the imprint 'F Sweetland Cocks' (author's collection).

Frank Sweetland COCKS seems to have changed or shortened his name to Frank SWEETLAND before arriving in Bedford late in 1906. All Bedford references use the name 'Frank Sweetland', 'F Sweetland', or simply 'Sweetland'. The 1911 census form (above), completed in his own hand, uses the name 'Frank Sweetland', and signed it as such. A 1916 photograph of his Tavistock Street studio shows the name as 'Sweetland.'

There is some evidence that Sweetland either worked for *Blake and Edgar*, the Bedford photographers or, more likely, supplied photographs to them; some pictures, clearly by Sweetland, appeared under their imprint. Similarly, he almost certainly supplied pictures to other local publishers such as *Hockliffe*, and *Timaeus*. Later, pictures originally published by Sweetland continued to be sold, without his imprint, until the early 1930s.

Street directories of Bedford show that Sweetland traded successively from 18 Ford End Road from 1905, 84 Hurst Grove from 1908, 79 Harpur Street from 1910, and finally 81 Tavistock Street from 1914 to 1916. The last precisely dateable Bedford photograph (BLARS X592/2) by Sweetland seems to have been 13th November 1915 outside his shop in Tavistock Street. By early 1917 he had vacated the premises, which were by then occupied by a hairdresser. So far I have not found any photographs by Frank after he left Bedford and moved to Bournemouth.

Competition between Bedford photographers seems to have been fierce – in addition to the well-known national publishers, contemporaneous Bedford photographers & publishers other than Sweetland included: *Blake & Edgar* of 38-40 High Street, *Brown & Collins* of 38 High Street, *J C Brown* of 36 Midland Road or 60 St Loyes, *G A Gearey* of 33 Brereton Road, *F Hockliffe* of High Street, *Henry J Kingham* of Cauldwell Street, *D Lindley* of 99 Tavistock Street, *Alice Neame* of Stanley Street & later 21a St. Peters Street and also her husband *Reginald D Pursey/Percy* (died in WW1) also of Stanley Street, but also under their joint name of *R & A Pursey* in St Loyes, *Rayner* of Adelaide Square, *Ruff* of Sharnbrook, *A Drake Sadler* of 82 Castle Road, *C H Solomon* (unknown location), *E Spears-Ball* of St Mary's Studio, *J Thompson* of 72 High Street, *C F Timaeus* of High Street, *W Salmon* of 65 High Street, *Sidney Wiggins* of 41 Stanley Street, and *J T Welch* of 6 Midland Road.

Frank and his family subsequently moved to Bournemouth, changed his surname back to Cocks, and took up residence first at 3 Oak Road, then Elms Way. At the time of his death he was said to be moderately wealthy, having acquired several properties and opened a grocery store. His wealth was reputedly the result of patents he held on a design of camera shutter and possibly a bicycle freewheel, but so far there is no substantive evidence.

Frank Sweetland Cocks was involved in a road accident with a motorcycle and an omnibus in Bournemouth and died in June 1936 aged 65 (Bournemouth Registry District. volume 2b, page 964). Kate Bertha died in 1954 aged 81 (Bournemouth Registry District. volume 6b, page.212). Their daughter, Bertha Irene, died aged 90 on 11th January 1978 in Bournemouth, never having married, but it seems her 'lodger' had a significant influence on her affairs.



Frank, Kate and Bertha Sweetland about 1907



Kate and Bertha Sweetland Cox facing the river by Bedford bridge, c1906 - photogravure