

Potton History Society Newsletter

POTTON Cricket Club.

A CONCERT

OF
VOCAL & INSTRUMENTAL
MUSIC

Will be given in the

Board School Room, Potton,

ON

FRIDAY, APRIL 25th, 1884,

In aid of the Funds of the above Club.

In addition to Ladies and Gentlemen residing in Potton,
Messrs. MEAD, SPRING, and GREEN of Sandy,
and Miss FOSTER, of Wrestlingworth,

Have kindly promised their assistance.

*Reserved Seats (numbered), 2s. ; Second Seats,
1s. ; Third Seats, 6d.*

Tickets to be obtained of Mr. C. J. Hercock, Market Place, Potton,
where a Plan of the Room may be seen.

An early application for Tickets is respectfully requested.

DOORS OPEN AT HALF-PAST SEVEN, TO COMMENCE AT EIGHT
O'CLOCK.

POTTON CHORAL SOCIETY.

A CONCERT

Will be given

ON WEDNESDAY NEXT,

December 16th, 1874, in

THE SCHOOL ROOM,

Adjoining the Wesleyan Chapel, POTTON.

Admission: Reserved Seats, (numbered), 2/-;
Second Seats, 1/-; Third ditto, 6d.

*Doors open at half-past Seven, Concert to commence
at Eight o'clock.*

Tickets may be had at Mr. H. BERRILL'S, Market
Square, POTTON, where a plan of the Room
can be seen.

H. BERRILL, PRINTER, POTTON.

Number 12 Summer 1991

A Surprise Package

A fascinating glimpse into the social life of Pottonians from 1866 to 1891 has recently been revealed after receiving a collection of posters and programmes from Mrs.E.Gardner, nee Stapley. Stored for 25 years by her sister after being removed from their aunt's house, Mrs.E.M.Banes, 31 Horslow Street, the collection has now been given to the History Society.

The earliest leaflet advertises the first of a series of 'Penny Readings' to be held in Mr Youd's Wool Rooms on November 2nd 1866, with the Rev.W.C.Bidwell in the chair. The programme consists of readings, recitations and musical items and tickets, costing 6d for reserved seats, 3d for front seats and 1d for back seats, could be obtained from three Market Square business men. For the season ending March 29th 1869, £18.14s.7d had been received for the eight meetings held. Payments amounted to £18.14s.6½d, making a profit of ½d! These included the cost of: removing chairs, lighting and sweeping room, hire of van to remove chairs, printing, tuning piano, beer (4s8d), hire of piano for the season (£3.3s), paraffin and Mr.Youd for the hire of the room (£1.1s.). An item dated November 21st states 'Policemen and others, refreshment, 1s6d'.

Mrs.Robarts and her pupils 'assisted by others from a distance' gave a concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music in the Teeswater Town Hall on January 4th 1876. As the tickets cost 25 cents, perhaps this concert was given in Canada? Printed in capitals at the base of the poster are the words 'God Save The Queen'.

In the 1880's Potton had active Choral and Orchestral Societies and on December 20th 1889 they combined to give a concert consisting of 60 performers. The venue was the Board School, the conductor Mr.E.Storr,

Headmaster, and the leader of the orchestra was Mr.W.Robarts. The violin soloist at a concert given by the Orchestral Society on February 6th 1891 was Miss Ethel Stapley, aged 9. Profits from concerts were sometimes donated to Potton Cricket Club, Mr.Storr (conductor, vocalist, cellist and pianist) being a very keen member.

A 'grand entertainment' was held in the Board School on April 12th 1887. The poster states 'Living Waxworks will be exhibited and will wax bright and mirthful when wound up. Children will dance in fancy costumes. Tableaux Vivants will be taken from Scenes in History and Romance. The Potton String Band have kindly consented to attend.' The cost of tickets ranged from 6d (2½pence) to 1s.6d (7½pence). All proceeds were to be given to the District Visiting Society for the Poor Sick.

The Band of Hope gave an entertainment in the Wesleyan School Room (now the Salvation Army Citadel), on April 9th 1891 which included Japanese and British Flag Action Songs and Musical Drills by Band of Hope Members.

An impressive poster headed 'Department of Science and Art, South Kensington' advertises the 'Potton Science School and Art Class Session 1890-1891.' The eight Patrons listed include the Rev.G.Evans Gwynne M.A., S.Whitbread Esq. M.P., Viscount Baring M.P. and J.Poole Wagstaff Esq. J.P.,D.L. The eight Potton Committee Members had been approved by the Department. Subjects taught were: 'Principles of Agriculture' and 'Drawing - second grade freehand, model and perspective.' Examinations were to be held in May 1891 and certificates would be awarded by Her Majesty's Examiners. The teacher for both subjects was Mr.E.Storr!

Studying the material received has been most rewarding. We now have information on the Town's leisure

activities and cultural pursuits, and understand the pleasure thus derived to lighten the load of the hard-working people of the time. Newspaper cuttings will now be studied to gauge the public's reactions to these events.

Copies of the 12 posters will be on view at the Potton Show on September 7th 1991.

Patricia R. Yates.

POTTON PENNY READINGS

The LAST of the Series for the Season will be given

On Friday Evening, March 29th, 1867,

In Mr. YOUNG'S

LARGE ROOM,

ROYSTON STREET.

JAMES WAGSTAFF, Esq.

WILL TAKE THE CHAIR.

PROGRAMME.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|
| <i>Reading</i> | "Sketches in Manchester" | Mr. Wm. Judd. |
| <i>National Song</i> | "God bless the Prince of Wales" | |
| <i>Reading</i> | "The Huguenots Battle Hymn" | Mr. J. F. Judd. |
| <i>Chorus</i> | "March of the Men of Harlech" | |
| <i>Reading</i> | { "Mr. Pickwick and his Friends fall into the clutches of the law" } | Mr. Breckon. |
| | "A Selection of Airs" | |
| <i>Reading</i> | "A Curtain Lecture by Mrs. Caudle" | Mr. G. Kitchin. |
| <i>Reading</i> | "Mary the Maid of the Inn" | Mr. M. Gibbs. |
| <i>Song</i> | "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!" | Mr. Douse. |
| <i>Reading</i> | "The Gridiron" | Mr. W. J. Arnold. |
| <i>Glee</i> | "Spring's Delights" | |
| <i>Reading</i> | "The Brothers of Birchington" | Mr. W. Smith. |

NATIONAL ANTHEM.

Local History Conference

In July of 1989, Martin Lawrence of the Harlington Heritage Trust organised a conference to which representatives of Local History Societies in East Bedfordshire were invited. The aim of the conference was to encourage the exchange of ideas and to bring about more co-operation between societies for the mutual benefit of all.

The success of the first conference resulted in the Biggleswade Society agreeing to host a similar event in 1990. This took place on 9th June, the same day as Biggleswade Carnival, although this was not intentional.

At an earlier meeting of the four local societies it had been decided that the theme of the conference would be the publication of information and the various ways in which societies could communicate the knowledge collected by their research to as wide an audience as possible.

After the initial reception and welcome by Mr. Horace Dilley delegates moved to the Social Club at the Brewery for the morning session when two speakers from Bedfordshire Rural Community Council spoke about Parish Maps. Alison Holden the Countryside Officer, and Terry Westlake the Rural Development Officer used a video and examples of maps already produced by communities in Bedfordshire to explain the concept of Parish Maps and the various forms that they can take. The use of the word "map" is not strictly correct in this context as to most people it has the meaning of a factual representation on paper of physical features on the ground. As the two ladies explained, a parish map can be anything that the producer wants to record, it can of course include buildings, roads etc, but can also include the plants and animals which occur in the local

environment. The message was that one should use one's imagination to produce something which although not necessarily a work of art would be appreciated by the community; if it turned out to be a work of art then so much the better.

After an excellent lunch provided by the ladies of St. Andrew's Church delegates re-assembled in the Chapter House for the afternoon session in which two contrasting aspects of local history publication were presented.

Jim Brown, the author of the book "Gamlingay" spoke of the years of research and hard work which went into the preparation of his manuscript. Although he had help from many sources he had still found it necessary to learn medieval Latin and to decypher the various scripts used in old documents. As those of you who were at our meeting when Jim described his work will know, he had had considerable advice and encouragement from the late Rowland Parker and he again paid tribute to the man to whom he referred as the grand-father of his book.

The production of the manuscript was by no means the end of the story, publishers, even those who specialise in history books were not particularly interested in what they saw as something which would only be of limited interest. Eventually Cassell decided that they would publish and the book appeared in 1989 but as Jim pointed out, the financial rewards were not large.

The Gamlingay book did not contain any photographs. In contrast, the final speaker Mrs. Yates, had taken as her subject "Photographs in Local History". Some would argue that photographs, limited as they are to the period after 1850 can only represent a small fraction of history but to many people this is enough. If they can relate photographs to their families or

to events which they or their families were involved in then that is sufficient.

Mrs. Yates showed how selection of suitable photographs and accurately researched captions had enabled this Society to produce three books which had sold well. Mrs. Yates also showed how the use of photographs could enhance the presentation of talks to organisations such as societies and schools; quoting the success of our street evenings as an effective example.

The use of photographic material in exhibitions such as the recent Church festival was also mentioned as a means of enabling a wider audience to appreciate the work of societies.

The presentations by the speakers at the conference were much appreciated by the delegates but the organisation particularly in respect of timing and the limited space available for displays left a lot to be desired. It is hoped that lessons will have been learned from this and that the next conference at Flitwick in 1991 will be free from the frustrations which marred this occasion.

Norman Parry

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF POTTON MANOR II

It still never fails to surprise me that the book on Potton Manor is still selling which perhaps indicates a continuing interest in the "enigma".

I thought I would give a further report, since I wrote in the last newsletter, of the latest pieces in the jigsaw.

A surprise telephone call from the solicitor of the Smekal estate informed me I could collect some pictures and documents from him. The framed photographs were those once hanging in the manor house at the time of Madame Pokarovas death. Nothing of real note apart from a picture of the pre-war Mercedes racing team. The backings of these pictures were a strange collection of all sorts of old prints, etc, but one had a blueprint made by Smekal. This blue print is the only one we have in the Society's archive of the many thousand that were destroyed when the house was demolished. (or were they?) I feel some still survive somewhere - can you help?

The photographs showed the work that Smekal was engaged in at the Skoda works, such as on a tram and electric generating units. There were also pictures of his work on the "Delta" car engine and of him in a racing car before the war. (The type of racing car is a mystery - I referred it to Mr Ware of the National Motor Museum but he has, as yet, not identified it)

The documents consisted of papers relating to Madame Pokorova including her passport, immigration papers and family photographs.

Amongst the family photographs was one showing Madame Pokorova, her husband, and a daughter. This confirms what we had heard about a daughter but not as we thought in UK but in Czechoslovakia.

The other photographs showed her family and places but, of course, they have no data on them to say who and what they are most frustrating. (Are your photographs dated with captions?)

Another unexpected piece in the jigsaw I found in a motor magazine which showed a picture of Madame Junck (aged 90) at the Essex Motor Show. She was a friend of the Smekals, and we have several photos in the Society's archives of them together. So I wrote to the Editor of the magazine and obtained her address in Prague. I wrote to her, asking about the Smekals, but I am afraid, to date, have had no reply. Perhaps she has forgotten about the Smekals or does not wish to recall that time.

As I wrote before I have no doubt more pieces of the Smekal jigsaw will come to light as time goes on, raising more questions than they answer, I expect.

If you would like to know more about the Manor - then read the book!! (available from Tysoes)

TCM Ball

Figure 2 Extract from an 1841 census enumerator's book for Preston (Lancash

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City or Borough of Preston Enumeration Schedule

Parish or Township of Preston

| PLACE | HOUSES | NAMES of each Person who abode therein the preceding Night. | AGE and SEX | | PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS. | Where Born | | |
|-----------|--------|---|-------------------|----|--|------------------|---------|---------|
| | | | M. | F. | | Parish or County | Country | Foreign |
| Smyth St. | 1 | Henry Harrison | 25 | | Blacksmith | | | 4 |
| | | John | 25 | | | | | |
| | | Henry | 1 | | | | | |
| | | Richard | 3 | | | | | |
| | (1a) | Thomas | 1 | | | | | |
| | | Richard | 25 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | Richard | 25 | | | | | |
| | (1b) | William | 25 | | | | | |
| | | John | 25 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | Richard | 25 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| do | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| do | 1 | Richard | 40 | | | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | Richard | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | Richard | 25 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |
| | | John | 15 | | Blacksmith | | | |

