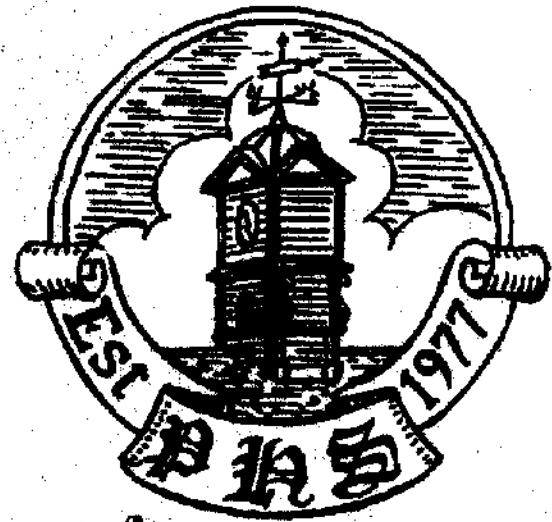


Botton History Society



Newsletter Number 30 Spring 2001

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Potton History Society Committee:-

Chairman	George Howe
Secretary	Jean McLennan
Treasurer	Anita Lewis
Programme/Publicity Secretary	Peter Ibbett
Committee Members	Ernie Wood
	Ken Lawson
Newsletter Editors	Mr & Mrs Leigh

For access to the archives in our research rooms
just telephone the key-holders;

Mr G. Howe	Potton 260935
Mr K Lawson	Potton 261209
Mrs J McLennan	Potton 261867

Acknowledgements:-

Our continued appreciation to Mr Witten for displaying and selling
our publications in Tysoe's Hardware Store.

We also thank the following for their continued support by
advertising our meetings:

Lindsay's Bakery,
Tysoe's Hardware Store,
Harper's Barber Shop.

Society News

Our **October** meeting welcomed local minister and society member, Pastor Stan Evers who related the story of the Potton Baptists. His research revealed that a growing non-conformist movement in Bedfordshire, stimulated by the preaching of John Bunyan, resulted in the formation of a new church in Potton in 1800. The present chapel building has been in use since 1802, with 13 pastors during that period.

At the **November** meeting the chairman, George Howe opened the Society's 23rd AGM on a very sad note as with deep regret he had to report the sudden passing away of committee member John Kirkby. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Jean and family. Norman Parry and Boo Matthews both resigned from the committee but will be continuing to assist the Society. After the various officer's reports on another successful year, Ernie Wood was elected to join the committee.

After the business of the AGM was completed, we were entertained as well as educated by Neil Alston on the subject of Mail Boxes. Both illustrations and models of the many different designs were used in Neil's fascinating account of how the box, fondly known as his little red friend, gradually came into service, and the safeguards needed to keep our mail safe. What type, and in whose reign, is your local little red friend?

In **December** George Howe presented an illustrated evening of 'Potton in the 20th Century'. All the slides shown were from the Society archives with the earliest dating back to 1901, leading us through the many events, celebrations and changes of the century right up to the present time. Bygone scenes were compared with their present day equivalent as we saw buildings that no longer exist, those that have undergone changes and those that have been added to the scene.

We began our 24th year with a talk on John Bunyan, given by Henry Fletcher from the Bunyan Museum in Bedford. Bunyan was born in humble circumstances at Elstow in 1628. He was baptised in 1655 and later wrote his famous Pilgrims Progress during two spells in Bedford goal for illegal preaching. He is not recorded as having visited Potton but did preach at Gamlingay.

Diana Boston, daughter-in-law of the well known childrens author Lucy Boston, was the speaker at our **February** meeting. We heard how their family home, Hemingford Manor, had been acquired in the thirties and how during subsequent renovations the unsuspected Norman core of the building had been revealed. Lucy Boston had also been an avid gardener and skilled needle woman in her later life and these aspects, as well as the most unusual house, were featured in the beautiful slides which accompanied this talk. We shall be visiting Hemingford Manor as part of our coach trip on 22nd July so watch for details of our 6th Historical Day Trip.

In 1996 a field on the north side of Potton known as The Mires was subject to an archaeological dig prior to a new housing development being built. At our **March** meeting the project officer, Martin Wilson, revealed that the sight had contained strong evidence of continuous occupation throughout the saxon and medieval periods. He concluded that this may well have been the original focus of the town. A copy of the full report on the findings of the dig has been placed in the Society's archives.

Archives Update

Steady progress is being made on filing all the documents held by the Society. The aim is to create a filing system that can be cross-referenced with the photographic collection. When the basic filing is completed it will then be necessary to record each document within a classification. George Howe is heading this operation and would be very pleased to have any offers of help. Extreme cold and other factors permitting, we beaver away on Thursday evenings. But, by mutual agreement, any time you can give would be very welcome.

Another area where help is needed is re-filing old posters - these get used for exhibitions and need some tender loving care to keep them in pristine condition. Also, a record needs to be made of all the other publications that come into the Society from other organisations. All these separate areas will finally culminate in one comprehensive index of all our archives.

Ken Lawson and I look after the photographic collection. This is, I am pleased to say, an on-going task - when photos are donated they are mounted on black sheets, classified, numbered and then indexed. I am at this moment in time checking all the photos to make sure none are missing and check on their condition, at the same time updating the index which gives details of the 5,500 photos we have in the collection. Peter is experimenting very successfully with digitising part of our photographic collection.

Ken is continuing with his cemetery survey, making additions as and when they occur.

Some of our Thursday evenings are used to select suitable photographs, etc, for the displays at our monthly meetings and the local library, as well as local events such as the recent World War II Exhibition and the annual Potton Town Council AGM and Potton Show.

Your contributions of photos and documents are very much appreciated, giving us details of local events and people and we would urge you to look into your own archives for any suitable material. It can, of course, be copied and returned to you. **But always remember that today's events make tomorrow's history.**

Speak to George or myself if you think you can help. I can guarantee you will enjoy your Society even more if you are contributing to the preservation of Potton.

Jean McLennan

Pubs Index.

Two gentlemen from the London area are in the process of compiling a list of 19th century hotels, inns and public houses in England and Wales. The idea is to collect all the references from such sources as the census returns and to produce a national database which could be consulted by the ever increasing number of people who have internet access. Seeing their request for information on one of the internet newsgroups (<http://www.pubsindex.freemove.co.uk>) and knowing that Potton's pubs have been well documented it was decided to pass our knowledge to them for inclusion in their directory.

Over the last few months this has been done and it was very gratifying to receive the following message of thanks :-

" Many thanks for this super contribution, which we have added to the index. With the single exception of a village in Kent that has only ever had a total of 5 licensed premises, Potton is now the best indexed location we have. We hope that news will give you some satisfaction - 'thanks' seems otherwise a little inadequate ".

To which we should add our thanks to all those members who have given information to our pubs archive.

Although the list was originally intended to be for the period 1800 to 1900, information outside that time scale is being accepted. Our next step will be to gather together all those isolated references to Potton pubs etc. from the years before 1800 and add those to the list. We have wills from the early 1500s which mention the Bell and the George, there may be others in the Burgoyne Manor documents.

Forthcoming programme

May 24th	The Sandstone Project	Martin Caddy
Jun 28th	Local Ironstone Walk	
Jul 26th	The Story of St. Ives	Bob Burn-Murdoch
Aug 23rd	Wrestlingworth	Local evening
Sep 27th	Mr Punch goes to the Great Exhibition	Peter Ibbett
Oct 25th	Revolution in our Landscape	Kevin Ward
Nov 22nd	Potton in 1951	Local evening
Dec 6th	Pictorial Entertainment	

The Enumerators Tale

With 2001 being another census year the following item which appeared in the Beds. Family History Journal was thought appropriate.

It was the first day of census and all through the land;
The pollster was ready... black book in hand.
He mounted his horse for a long dusty ride;
His book and some quills were tucked by his side.
A long winding ride down a road barely there;
Toward the smell of fresh bread wafting up on the air.
The woman was tired, with lines on her face;
And wisps of brown hair she tucked back into place.
She gave him some water... as they sat at the table;
And she answered his questions... the best she was able.
He asked of her children... Yes she had quite a few;
The oldest was twenty, the youngest not two.
She held up a toddler with cheeks round and red;
his sister, she whispered, was napping in bed.
She noted each person who lived there with pride;
And she felt the faint stirrings of the wee one inside.
He noted the sex, the colour, the age...
The marks from the quill soon covered the page.
At the number of children, she nodded her head;
And saw her lips quiver for the three that were dead.
The places of birth she "never forgot";
Was it Brighton? or Bedford? or Lincoln.. or not?
They came from Scotland, of that she was clear;
But she wasn't quite sure how long they'd been here.
They spoke of employment, of schooling and such;
They could read some.. and write some.. though not really much.
When the questions were answered, his job there was done;
So he mounted his horse and he rode toward the sun.

We can almost imagine his voice loud and clear;
"May God bless you all for another ten years".
Now picture a time warp.. it's now you and me;
As we search for the people on our family tree.
We squint at the census and scroll down so slow;
As we search for that entry from long, long ago.
Could they only imagine on that long ago day;
That the entries they made would affect us this way.
If they knew, would they wonder at the yearning we feel;
And the searching that makes them so increasingly real.
We can hear if we listen the words they impart;
Through their blood in our veins and their voice in our heart.

--oo0oo--

Recent Publication.

Dennis Hardy, the Professor of Utopian History at Middlesex University has recently had published a book entitled Utopian England, Community Experiments 1900-1945 as part of an academic series entitled Studies in History, Planning and the Environment. At a published price of £22.99 in paperback and £65 in hardback it is unlikely to feature on many bookshelves outside academic establishments.

Chapter 2 of the book deals with the 'back to the land' movement and includes some information on the Potton Estate as part of the Land Settlement Association. Two photographs from our archives have been used although in the credits we are incorrectly described as Potton Historical Society even though the author was given the proper name when the prints were supplied to him.

As they say in show business there is no such thing as bad publicity and it is pleasing to see our efforts reaching a wider audience.

Bob Darlow - Sutton Postman, Nov. 1969 to Apr. 1991.

Extracts from Bob's memories as related at our meeting on Sutton in August 2000.

Bob Darlow was a postman for 21 years, covering Biggleswade Road, Potton through to the John o' Gaunt Golf Club & Sutton cross-roads, Portobello Farm and then the village of Sutton itself & finally finishing at Mount Pleasant on the hill down Deepdale. A retirement reception was held at the Sutton Village Hall for Bob in April 1991.

Parcels.

Unlike today when we have Parcel Force vans, parcels were delivered by the cycle along with the letters. Golf clubs for instance were tied to the crossbar and delivered about three times a week.

One morning a parcel (shoe box shaped) arrived at the Sorting Office and when picked up there was juice dripping from it. After tying the damp parcel to the handlebars Bob arrived in the village. "At the house of delivery I knocked on the door - the lady answered, I described that the box came in all wet and the lady said "Oh that's OK. it's from mother-in-law, it contains tomatoes and cucumbers for me to make chutney with". Bob replied, "Don't let your mother-in-law send any more tomatoes as I grow them and will give you some".

Money.

When Bob first started he was told to deliver cash in bags to the Post Office in Sutton for them to run the shop - this was done on the bike with the letters. Something that you can't imagine would be allowed to happen these days. This delivery took place every Thursday, but after only a few years 'around the mid-seventies' cash was then taken by the vans.

Closure.

It was a sad day for the people of Sutton when the Post Office and Shop closed. I was always seeing people coming to and from the shop but after it closed Sutton seemed a very quiet and different place as the village folk would then go elsewhere for their daily needs.

The Letter.

One day when I was sorting I came across this letter from Quebec (Canada) addressed to the Lord Mayor of Sutton, Sandy, Beds. Rather than return the letter I decided to give it to John Ream who lived at Portobello Farm. At that time he was Chairman of Sutton Parish Council. After seeing the contents he passed the letter on to Mrs Yates of the Potton History Society. It was from someone who had a museum in Quebec and he wanted information about the Burgoyne family because one of the family was the officer in charge when we took Quebec from the French.

Mrs Yates managed to get some information that around Quebec there was a small hamlet called Potton and a Sutton which was a ski resort. Also there was a Shefford and a Clifton. I expect that when British soldiers left the Army they settled around Quebec and named the places after their home town or village names.

The Kittens 1984.

When I was delivering down Deepdale I cycled along an old farm track that led to two cottages. Half way along the track I came across five kittens about six weeks old. I asked at the cottages if they belonged to them, they said no - as I couldn't leave them I went along to the Locomotive and got a box then brought them home on my bike. I gave them away to good homes, Mrs Pat Thwaites had one - named Jasper and he is now 17 years old and still going strong.

Changes in Sutton.

The ford is much improved having been banked up, raised and cemented so making it more limited for traffic to get stuck there. More house development has not spoilt Sutton too much as mostly larger houses were built rather than a quantity of smaller homes.

The school has expanded a little now with extra classrooms needed for more children coming into the school.

To sum up I have enjoyed my time as postman in the village of Sutton. It was a pleasure to be of service to the village.

Bob Darlow & Philip Westmoreland.

Chimney Stacks - A Potted History.

Both Greek and Roman authors frequently mention fire and smoke when referring to home life, but always in a vague way. Homer makes Ulysses, when in Calypso's grotto, express the desire that he might see the smoke ascending from his home town; in other words he was homesick.

It is unsure whether either the Greeks or Romans - even though their dwellings were elaborately designed and provided with many luxuries of the artistic kind - had even rudimentary chimneys in their houses until a late period. Remains of buildings outside Pompeii have shown no direct sign of chimneys. Although Paladio mentions two ancient fireplaces, he describes them as standing in rooms with columns supporting architraves on which were placed the pyramids or funnels through which smoke was conveyed away.

So it would appear that the basic chimney stacks and pots that we are familiar with today were, 2000 years ago, unknown - or indeed very rare. Today we take them for granted, but if we look up and take notice, what an infinite variety of structures do we see, tall ones, thin, bulky, squat, ornate ones, in fact how would Santa have entered our homes without them?

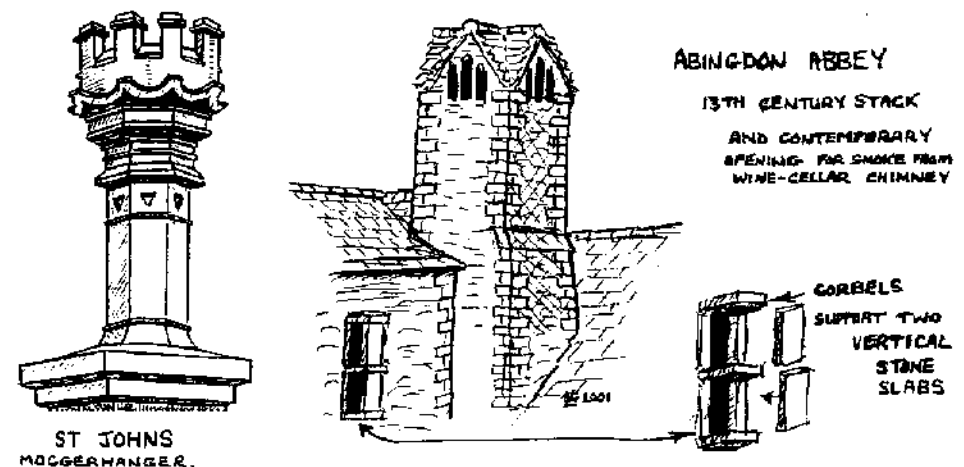
Much of our early general knowledge of Greek and Roman structures comes from our studies of contemporary pictures - mostly painted on pottery, specimens of which exist even from the archaic period. In addition there are mural paintings and mosaics that belong to the age of high society of those times. Together these embrace a wonderful source of information including a record of the most trivial of domestic affairs and we thank the graphic artists of the day. Yet, however hard we search their representations, fireplaces and chimneys as we know them, are just not there!

Plenty of pictures show fires alight in the open, being used for various purposes, the most important being domestic duty, cooking.

We also see braziers used for interior heating, where glowing embers from outside wood fires were brought inside. This heating fuel was eventually replaced by charcoal. It seems that these braziers were in common use in Greece until the 18th century, even longer in Italy, Spain and France. Warming pans, of a sort containing hot embers, were used for various applications, hands, feet, bedwarmers and such.

Earlier attempts to heat the dwellings of the well-to-do were devised in the various forms of the hot air basement (the hypocausta) and were connected via channels in the thickness of the walls above, whereby the hot air - from which smoke could not always be excluded - flowed into the rooms via ornate openings in lion's or dolphin's heads. These could be opened or closed by a trap, allowing heat to flow when required. It was essential by the choice of wood and other fuel to keep a brisk fire going and thus reduce the smoke nuisance, even so smoke must have entered the apartments. These systems were not in common everyday use by everyone.

Eventually fires were built on a hearth, a flat stone or a concave depression, or even a shallow pit. When a Roman Villa was discovered in Bognor in Sussex a hearth similar to this was found. It was in the form of a flat stone and some bricks firmly clamped together with iron ties to form a well like enclosure but there was no sign of a chimney structure or connection.



Celtic England shows us a country of single chamber dwellings, later having cell-like structures, with the stove on a central hearth stone beneath an opening in the roof. Later, in the interests of public safety, a curfew was imposed on this type, to reduce the danger of conflagration resulting from unattended open fires. The law obliged that open fires were to be covered at the approach of night-fall, whether in a pit or on a flat raised hearth stone, the stone cover conserved heat from the hot embers. Incidentally, the institution of the curfew made the detection of secret assemblies an easy matter for Henry 1 (c1100). The curfew should have been abolished when the chimney's safety aspects began to make an appearance, but Henry, wanting to keep an eye on things, kept it on.

A desire to provide safeguards against serious fires rather than conserving heat was the guiding principle responsible for the evolution of the semi-enclosed fireplace and chimney. Field practice taught the advantage of building up the fire within the confines of a back wall and two side wings. A serious lesson was soon learned especially when the back wall was of muddy, clay covered wattle and wood, which invariably had disastrous results so a more fireproof wall was sought. The building up of the side wing enclosures with masonry would allow the provision of a back plate. The benefits to be derived from a side opening in the outer wall and some means of directing the smoke towards it - for example a hood - sooner or later became evident and so the fireplace and the chimney came into existence. We can see all this in the Romanesque buildings c1050.

From then on chimney stacks and pots moved on a-pace, evolving and developing mainly by trial and error. Many mediaeval houses were 'modernised' as to their chimney arrangements in the 16th century. All felt they had to have them and as such they became status symbols. Charles 11 taxed them, but their 'keeping up with the Joneses' importance was - to the affluent - considered of such status value that taxes were willingly paid. Chimneys were accordingly made to look much larger and many false stacks were built, topped with the most decorative pots available.

In the large manors (such as Sulgrave, Northamptonshire, where George Washington's ancestors lived) the chimney stack was built as a great opening on the ground floor with a large cambered oak beam to act as a lintel in the side room, thereby making an inglenook. In this people sat and bacons and hams were smoked in the huge cavity above which ran straight upwards narrowing as it neared the top. However with this type of chimney downdraughts were a problem - ideal for smoky bacon though. This downdraught was overcome by a large curtain surrounding the whole inglenook and was adjusted to suit the prevailing conditions.

As progress moved on and cooker ranges entered the scene so better and more efficient smoke stacks were designed and the huge chimneys began their inevitable decline. Even so the status of the chimney still flourished and some people were sufficiently chimney conscious to name their houses 'High Chimneys', 'Three Chimneys', 'Red Chimneys' and so on.

But the smoke stack chimney and its ornately decorated pots was nearing the end of its useful purpose, the introduction of electricity and gas saw to its rapid decline and the chimney and pots were reduced to a small ventilation pipe or small cowl covered opening in the roof. Now at the end of 2000 years the artists of today, when painting a modern housing estate, will show no chimneys but they will show - as the Greeks and the Romans did - cooking outside, although this time it will be the barbecue and the local fete pig roast.

So keep your eyes open for those monumental structures that are fast disappearing, they are a pleasure to behold and the ornate chimney pots now have a pride of place, not only in our gardens but even in our homes too!

Compiled from 'Chimney Pots and Stacks' by Valentine Fletcher and other sources.

Keith Geoffrey Lawrence. 2001.

Year 2000 Weather.

In Potton and the surrounding area we have been fortunate not to have suffered the floods and gales which have seriously affected some parts of the country. One's impression of the situation is affected by the views of the climatic pessimists in the media who appear to take great delight in presenting a worst case scenario with a lot of doubtful statistics thrown in to back up their statements.

In early December a BBC forecaster, when summarising the November weather, said there had been an average of 19 inches of rain over the country. What she omitted to say was that the 19 inches referred to the 3 month period September to November and that the figure was affected by the abnormal rainfall in Sussex and Kent where well above average rainfall was experienced. Other parts of the country were much closer to their normal seasonal figures.

The average total rainfall for the country during 2000 was 47.13 inches, the highest yearly sum since 1872 and the sixth wettest in 275 years of records. Potton's figure was 32.8 inches an increase on a normal year - if there is such a thing - of about 40%. The wettest month was October with just over 5 inches but this was slightly less than that which was experienced in September of 1998.

For what it is worth an inch of rain gives 4.7 gallons per square yard or about 22,750 gallons per acre. Multiplying this by the number of acres in the parish and the year's rainfall one reaches the somewhat unbelievable statistic that 2000 million gallons of water fell on Potton in year 2000. What are the odds on talk of hosepipe bans in 2001.

Year 2000 was the 10th warmest year since temperature records began in 1659. Where do we go from here? I suppose it depends on one's degree of cynicism and mistrust of scientists. After all it was only in the 1970s that we were being warned by the then Professor of Climatology at the University of East Anglia to prepare for a new mini Ice Age. Now, it is all depletion of the Ozone layer, greenhouse gases, and global warming which are used to try to explain what will probably turn out to be natural variations in our climate.

January has been a good month for the disbelievers. A report in a Sunday newspaper on the 14th stated that the predictions of an increase in temperature had been exaggerated by as much as 40% because of inaccuracies in the method of recording temperatures at the sea's surface in the two sites in the Pacific, the only ones used in the surveys. The newspaper report asked why it was that the fact that remote satellite temperature recordings taken over many parts of the World do not show any significant increase in surface temperature. Various other bits of doubtful data were also quoted.

The second report appeared on the 23rd January. In this a group of UN sponsored scientists at their annual conference held in Shanghai (why do these people have a different exotic location each year?) are saying that since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century a layer of polluted air has built up and this layer prevents the sun's rays from reaching the earth. With the removal of polluting industries now advocated this barrier will be gradually eliminated and we will all get hotter.

Hang on - wasn't the theory that the sun's infra-red rays could penetrate this layer and that it was the re-radiated warmth from the earth which could not escape hence the so-called greenhouse effect adding to Global Warming. If the current report is to be believed why is it that the years before the Industrial Revolution were not marked by a much warmer climate ?

Which brings us back to the fact that much more research is needed to find out exactly what is happening - a point eagerly seized on by the cynics to say that the whole exercise is an attempt by the scientists to obtain more funds to continue their pet projects.

I can't really see that it is going to make a lot of difference to any of us and no doubt our descendants will grin and bear it the same as we do with the vagaries of the British climate.

N.P.

A Senior Citizen Defined,

A Senior Citizen is one who was here before The Pill, television, frozen food, credit cards and ball-point pens.

For us, time-sharing meant togetherness, not computers and a chip meant a piece of wood.

Hardware meant hard wear and software wasn't even a word.

Teenagers never wore slacks. We were before pantyhose, drip-dry clothes, dishwashers, clothes dryers and electric blankets.

We got married first and then lived together (How quaint can one be?). Girls wore Peter Pan collars and thought "cleavage" was something butchers did.

We were before Batman, vitamin pills, disposable nappies, pizzas, instant coffee and even Chinese takeaways.

In our day, cigarette smoking was "fashionable", grass was for mowing, pot was something you cooked in.

A gay person was the life and soul of the party and nothing more, while Aids meant beauty lotions or help for someone in trouble.

We are today's Senior Citizens, a hardy bunch when you think of how the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make.

R. Cooper

—oo0oo—

Ken's Poem

A letter sent to the magazine *THIS ENGLAND* sought the wording of a long forgotten verse about "pretty girls" and Potton. With no hesitation old Pottonian, Ken Lawson was able to supply the missing lines.

Sutton for mutton

Potton for beef

Gamlingay for pretty girls

And Waresley for thieves

Let us hope that by recording this ditty in our newsletter another small piece of history has been saved from disappearing in the mists of time. This serves to emphasise the importance of oral history and the need to gather memories as well as the written word.

NOTICE BOARD

Do You Remember 1951

It is now 50 years since the Festival of Britain. One reminder of this is the Potton sign which stands in the Market Square. In November this year we plan to feature life in our town in the early fifties. We would like members to search out any items of interest (local and national) that would enable us to develop the 50's file in our archives.

—oo0oo—

Our Silver Jubilee

The Society celebrates its 25th year in 2002. Your committee will be discussing its programme of meetings and events for this year shortly. Any suggestions and ideas will be most welcome.

—oo0oo—

Potton History Society Needs You!

Can you spare one Thursday evening a month to help your Society continue to flourish. There are currently two vacant seats on the committee, so don't wait until the next AGM, volunteer now and be sure of your place in history. Just speak to any committee member.

—oo0oo—

Newsletter no 31

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome. Please pass items to Norman Parry, Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue will be 1st August 2001.