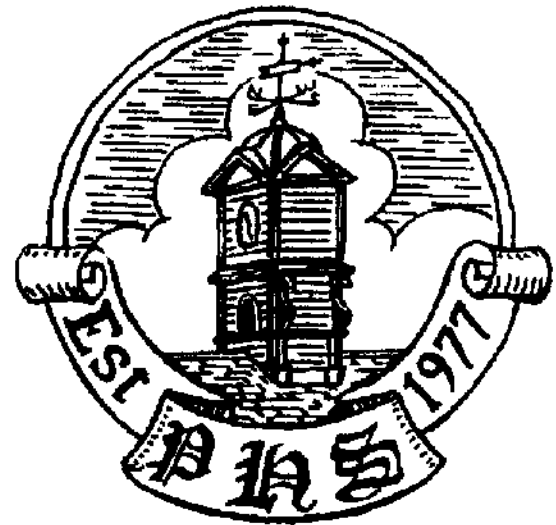


Potton History Society



Newsletter Number 32 Spring 2002

Contents

Society News	2
A Tribute to Michael and Muriel Ibbett	6
The Mystery of a Green Glass Seal	10
Bedfordshire War Memorial Project	12
In Celebration of Norman Parry's Life with Potton History Society	15
Edward Hutchinson and Gordon Jack Hutchinson	18
Advertising as an Art Form	19
If Only Bricks Could Talk	21
A Little Bit of Family History	24

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.
Potton Library
Potton Post Office

Society News

The **October** meeting featured the County Archivist, Kevin Ward, who spoke about Land Enclosures and their effects upon the Landscape and rural life. The process had begun in the 16th century and was completed with the Parliamentary Enclosures of 1760 and 1820. Potton was unusual in that it had two separate Enclosure Acts. The Enclosure Acts set out the rules for each Parish and set up Commissioners to organise the reallocation of land and provide for new roads and drains to service the new landscape created by abolishing the older Field strip system. A landscape worked and used by all the Parish was replaced by one owned by a small number who came to regard it as their private land. Documents and photographs from the Society Archives illustrated local changes, including the work of Norman Parry on Potton Enclosures.

Our **November** meeting began with the Annual General Meeting. Chairman George Howe reported that the Society was in good health having had an excellent twenty-fourth year. Membership remained at a high level and the Society had maintained a good variety of activities. He thanked all those who had helped the Society uphold its position as one of the leading groups in the County.

The meeting also featured a look back at the Potton of 1951 in Festival of Britain Year. George Howe presented a series of slides illustrating life in the Town at this time. Peter Ibbett provided information from documents of the time including items from the Biggleswade Chronicle of the day uncovered by Patricia Yates. This included a report on the Gala Day held as part of the Festival of Britain Year where a procession was led from the Market Square to the football ground at the Hollow by a 'person dressed as a monkey'. The Festival Queen was Miss Anne Gravestock and the best tableaux prize was awarded to the entry from the Canteen Staff from the School Meals Service.

The Chairman opened the Society's **December** meeting with very sad news. A founder member, previous Chairman and honorary member Norman Parry passed away, after being ill for a while. Members were reminded of his many achievements in the Society. As a result of extensive research, his knowledge of Potton was immense. Thankfully this will remain with the Society forever as Norman placed much of his knowledge into reports for the Society. Enclosures and genealogy were his favourite subjects. He also played a large part in the Society's photographic collection.

Chairman George Howe went on to present the pictorial evening. Our archives contain quite a collection of videos taken locally of various events and one or two commercial videos presented to the Society containing local interest. Also, thanks to Eastern Arts, all of the old films from the George Randall collection have been placed on video. These films used to be shown as local newsreel in the Parish Room in the 1950s when it was used as a picture house. They range from pulling down the old Shambles to building the Clock House, many sporting events, other local events and many weddings. Extracts from above were edited into an hour long show, taking the Society through the years from 1951 to the Millennium, bringing back many memories.

The **January** meeting of the History Society featured programme secretary Peter Ibbett with an evening devoted to Morton's Cyclopaedia of Agriculture. This work from the early 1850's provided an insight into the mind of the progressive Victorian Farmer. This was a time when new developments in science and steam power provided fertile ground for a new breed of men who sought to take increased profits from the land by the application of the latest knowledge and technology. Many of their advances were to last until the development of our post-war farming methods. The talk was illustrated by a number of steel engravings which formed the initial part of the two volumes of over 2000 pages.

The **February** meeting of the Society welcomed Phillip Rutt who provided an unforgettable evening of his memories as a child during the last war. The arrival of an evacuated East End family from London provided all sorts of challenges for a rural Bedfordshire family. There were many humorous incidents and examples of 'make do' such as taking your own food to a wedding. The memories also included the traumas of the loss of life and the bravery of ordinary people who found themselves for the first time in the front line of a war. Flying bombs overshoot London and landed in this area. The glow from the bombing of London could be seen in the skies of Bedfordshire. The excellent talk brought back many memories to members of the audience. On display were some of the collection of wartime photographs held by the Society.

Once again the Society was able to draw on the talents of its own members for the talk in **March**. Stan Evers shared with us the results of his research into his lifelong hero, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a renowned baptist preacher of the Victorian era. Born and raised in the Colchester area, Spurgeon's powers as an orator became apparent at a very early age and he was invited to preach in the fenland villages, where he remained for several years. By the age of twenty he was transferred to London and soon found himself preaching to crowds of up to ten thousand in many of the great halls in the city, including the Crystal Palace. The talk was illustrated by both contemporary material and by photos Stan took whilst on his travels to find out more about the man who so inspired him.

--oo0oo--

I am very pleased to announce that Vera Parry has volunteered to step into one of Norman's roles and help with the production of the newsletter. In future, items for inclusion in the newsletter should be passed to Vera, who will be transferring the text onto computer disc. If you have your own computer and wish to supply your articles on disc, please use the Rich Text Format as this will make the necessary allowance for my antiquated equipment. Ed.

Future Meetings

Undoubtedly many of you will have memories, memorabilia and photographs from Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee. Any items relating to the 1977 Jubilee, especially regarding events which took place in Potton or the local area, will be most welcome additions to our own existing collection for the May meeting.

Our August local evening will this year be highlighting Gamlingay so any local material on our neighbours over the Cambridgeshire border will also be welcome.

There will be no October meeting in the Community centre. Instead we are planning a 25th Anniversary Party at the John O'Gaunt Golf Club along the lines of our 21st celebration. Watch for further details. Please let us know if you have any suggestions for the evening.

--oo0oo--

Forthcoming Programme

May 23rd	Potton Celebrates	G Howe & P Ibbett
Jun 27th	Town Walk	7.30pm start
Jul 25th	Capability Brown	D Cozens
Aug 22nd	Local Evening	
Sep 26th	C J Hercock of Potton	A Flowerday
Oct	Silver Jubilee Celebration	
Nov 28th	AGM & Gamlingay Wood	P Walker
Dec 12th	Silver Jubilee Quiz	

A Tribute to Michael and Muriel Ibbett.

My parents were both strong supporters of this society since it was formed in 1977. The loss of both of them in the Autumn of 2000 was a shock to all who regarded them as an enduring part of the group. Both preferred to give their support behind the scenes. My father lent his practical expertise at the annual exhibition at the Potton Show as well as providing an inexhaustible supply of stories and information about his 50 years in the town. My mother was part of the refreshments team and also helped from time to time with society projects. I provide below an edited version of the tributes I gave at their funerals in the Parish Church.

My father was not a Pottonian by birth, having been born in St. Neots in 1923, but came to be accepted as one of the locals. He came to regard himself as a Pottonian, choosing his final resting place in the cemetery where two former Potton Ironmongers lie.

He was a remarkable man who put much more into life than he took from it. Indeed, wherever I have been with my 'Ironmonger's Shop' talk I have never failed to come across those who not only knew my father but spoke of him with great pleasure.

For many in the town the abiding memory of my father was of a shopkeeper who provided 'old-fashioned service'. No effort was spared to seek out any item that was required. For others my father was an endless source of information and advice about everything connected with the shop. But for so many in the town and beyond, the mention of my father's name would bring a smile of pleasure to the face with the memories of the wonderful conversations and stories that he shared with them.

My father enjoyed life. In common with many whose lives were changed by wartime he looked upon each day as a bonus to be enjoyed and a local community as one to which it was a duty to contribute one's talents.

My father believed in doing, not talking. His work for groups such as the Potton Charities and the local Traders Association was motivated by a desire to use his energies for the benefit of others in the town.

He was a skilled craftsman who was able to recreate in his workshop metal items such as the Potton Hoe or wooden articles such as a complete music stand for his grand-daughters, made from a range of different woods.

He was a man of sensitivity, though not often shown to others, glimpsed in some of his drawings and art-work, some of which he contributed to the local Art Club and the Potton Show as well as some of our society notelets.

In his retirement he developed his skills as a gardener. The area behind the shop developed increasing colour and variety as the years went by. In the garden of life my father was a Master Gardener. He knew when to apply his knowledge and skills and when it was wise to let nature have its own way. He knew the value of taking the time to enjoy the fruits of his labours and to share them with others.

My mother was born in St. Andrews, Fife, in January 1922, the youngest daughter of James and Anna Main. She grew up in an area rich in native heritage and character. Her school report showed her to be hard working with the potential to develop her academic talents. She followed her father into the Post Office, working for a time as a telephonist.

She grew up by the sea with its wonderful sweep of sands by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club disappearing in the distance towards Leuchars and its RAF base. It was these sands that featured in the film 'Chariots of Fire' with its opening sequence of runners on the beach. My mother was also a good runner in her youth, growing up with the sea air blowing through her hair as she also ran on the sands of St. Andrew's.

Fate was to take her far from home. Wartime brought servicemen into the area. D Flight of No.1 Squadron contained a St. Neots born trainee airman and romance blossomed. My father was stationed there for only a short time before other postings, including one in Oklahoma.

After the war ended the relationship took firm root. Pictures of my parents on Youth Hostel expeditions into the hills of Scotland and Wales still show the joy they got from both the beauty of nature and from being together. They married on May 15th 1948 at St. Andrew's. The wedding photographs show a handsome well matched couple looking confident in each other and their ability to deal with the future. It must have taken some courage on my mother's part to leave her family, friends and native land and to start a new life in a far away market town in East Bedfordshire.

She would cycle, with my father, from St. Neots to the newly acquired Ironmongers shop and then cycle back after a day's work. Her Scottish accent must have been a challenge to Potttonians to get used to. She joined the local WI and contributed her talents at Piano playing and singing in the local Choir as well as her organisational skills. She was always supportive of local groups throughout her life.

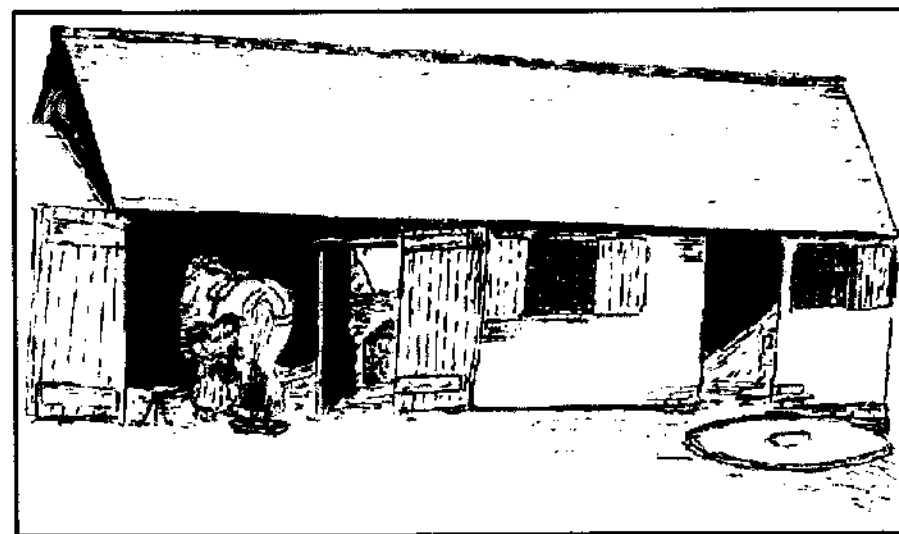
She succeeded looking after a large house, a husband, three sons, shop assistants and innumerable customers with never-failing cheerfulness and positive support. Behind the counter at Tysoe's she won the respect of the townsfolk by her cheerful helpfulness. She adorned dusty Ironmonger's shelves with a never ending collection of ornaments and fancy goods that provided a feminine touch amongst spades, forks, hoes and paint pots. My mother's self reliance saw her through the loss of my father and she was determined to continue to lead her own life. It was with a sense of disbelief that the news of my mother's stroke was greeted:- 'Why I only saw her the other day, striding off down the street, wearing one of her distinctive hats, with a cheerful wave and a smile as if she were off on a long ramble. She was such a character, so full of energy and vitality'.

Along the coasts of her native Scotland and from the waters of its Lochs sunlight reflects in a distinctive manner. My mother had a sparkle in her eyes that matched the beauty of her birthplace and will be remembered by all those who knew her.

I intend to pay a fuller tribute to my parent's contribution to Pottton in next years programme. I would be grateful for any memories or items that members may have connected with my parents and their work in the shop and the town so that I can prepare a memorial file for our archives that will illustrate the lives of two Potttonians in the second half of the twentieth century.

I would also like to thank members for their kind support and understanding over the last few months.

Peter Ibbett.



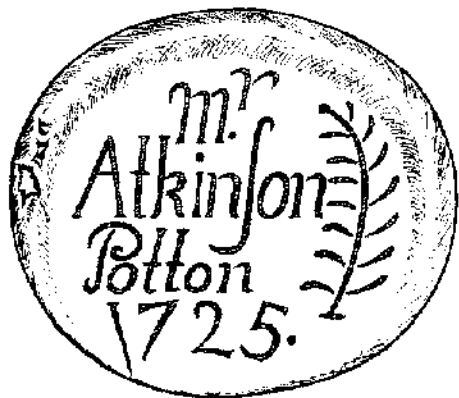
One of Mick's sketches, of the old forge in Brook End typically unsigned.

The Mystery of a Green Glass Seal

A glass seal, olive green in colour, expertly copied by Keith Lawrence, was found by Mr. Hills in his Horne Lane garden. On being shown this object, two questions came to mind.

What was the purpose of such a seal? Who was Mr. Atkinson?

Ms. C. Delahunty, Social History Curatorial Assistant at Bedford Museum, kindly undertook the necessary research work connected with query No. 1. Consulting the Internet, an article stated that glass seals date from the mid 17th century. The glassblower would place a blob of



molten glass on the shoulder of the bottle, which was then impressed with a circular matrix inscribed with a name, initials or a crest. Gentlemen were the first to use such seals, followed by Taverns. From the 1720's, sealed bottles began to be used by wine merchants. It was assumed that the seals protected the ownership of the bottles when sent to the Vintner for filling, but the purchase of such bottles was costly.

Was Mr. Atkinson a gentleman, a tavern keeper or a wine merchant?

The next task was to trace predecessors bearing the same name, spelt Atkinson, Adkinson, Atkinson or Atkynson. A William Atkynson was Vicar of Potton from 1515 until his death. A transcript of his will, dated March 12th 1533, is included in John Hunt's 'A History of St. Mary's Church'. William requests that 'my body be buried in the north porch of the Church at the entering in of the same porch from my Vicarage'. John Baxter, Priest, in his will of 1566, refers to his sister, Mary Atkynson, and her husband Richard.

Transcripts of Parish Registers, recording Births, Marriages and Deaths, date from 1602. On January 6th 1603, Richard, son of Alex Atkinson, was baptised. Sadly, his burial was on May 15th 1605. The marriage of John Atkinson to Rose Harper took place on November 26th 1615. As the Christian names of Alexander, Richard and John are frequently used, it is difficult to identify each generation. Unfortunately, occupations are rarely included.

According to the Hearth Tax of 1671, Alexander paid tax on three hearths, John on six and Richard on four. On this evidence of the number of hearths, the houses were large, but there is no indication as to where they were situated.

Ten memorial stones, in St. Mary's Churchyard, record the deaths of seven males and five females in the Atkinson family from 1683 - 1722. The Atkinson memorials are included in the one hundred and sixty now listed as items of historical importance. They are characterised by deeply carved scroll work depicting skulls, cross-bones, crossed coffins, spades and hour glasses. One can now begin to form the opinion that the family were wealthy.

The words 'Vicar and generous benefactor to the poor of the town' are inscribed on the memorial stone of Alexander who died in 1712. The Burial Register described him as 'gent'. He left two legacies, each of £30.00. The interest on one legacy was to be received yearly by the Minister of the Parish for preaching a sermon on the first Sunday after November 8th, the anniversary of Alexander's death. The interest from the second sum was to be paid for teaching poor children to read.

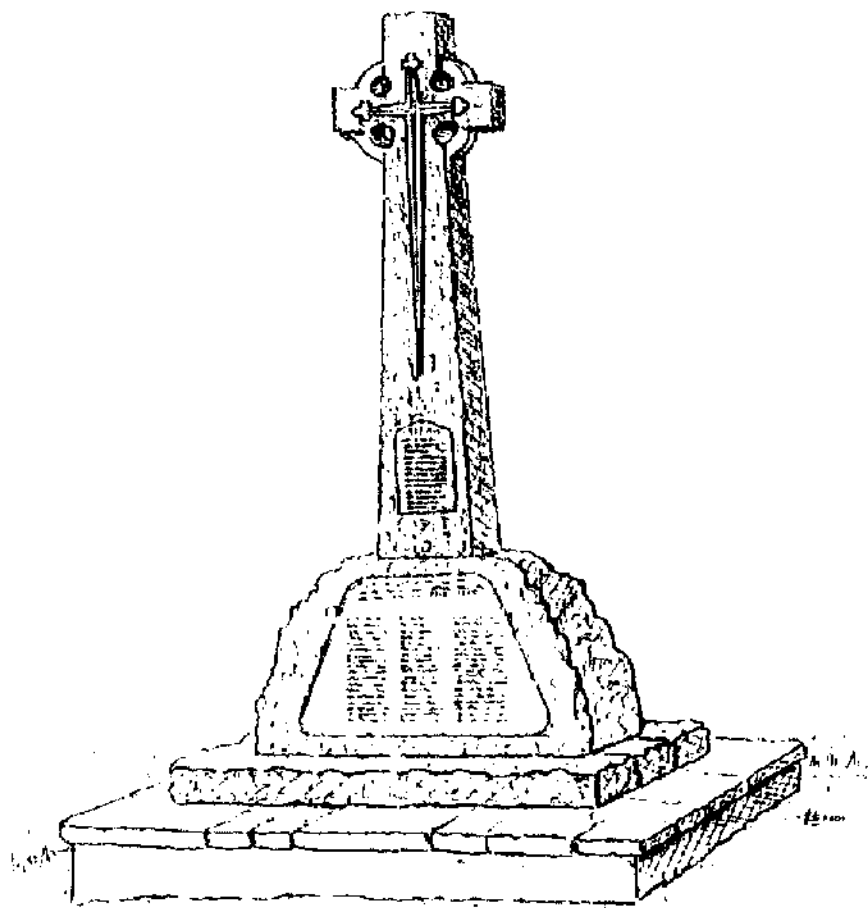
From two entries in the Church Registers, one can assume that the Atkinson families had moved to London. On December 26th 1749, John Raymond of Sutton, married Elizabeth Atkinson of Westminster. The final burial entry, dated January 23rd 1755, states 'John of London, Attorney'.

Dare we make the conjecture that it was John's family who had used wine bottles, decorated with olive green glass seals?

Patricia R. Yates - Jan 2002.

Bedfordshire War Memorial Project

It was at one of our Committee meetings that George Howe handed me a letter from Lynda Smith who is the Co-ordinator of the Bedfordshire Family History War Memorial Project and asked if I would be prepared to carry out the survey of our War Memorial. When I was concerned with the survey of the Cemetery a year or so ago I noticed and recorded several memorials relating to the two Great Wars so I was only too pleased to carry out this project.



The memorial, sited just inside the Sandy Road Cemetery

1939 - 1945

APTHORPE A.W.
COBB G.W.
DAISLEY A.
EDWARDS R.
HUTCHINSON A.
JAKES D.
KIDD V.
KITCHENER M.
LANGLEY G.T.
MONTEITH E.A.W.
NORMAN S.
TRUNDLEY L.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN HONOURED
MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS PARISH WHO
FELL IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918.

BAKER W.	FREESTONE J.H.	MUNKMAN F.
BLANE H.	GATES W.H.	PAYNE W.
BONESS W.	GIDDINGS H.K.	PEACOCK W.
BOSTON C.H.	GINN F.W.	REYNOLDS A.C.
BREED F.C.	GURNEY A.G.	REYNOLDS J.F.
CARTER F.	HILL W.	REYNOLDS W.E.
CARTER H.	HUTCHINSON H.	RICHARDSON E.G.
CLARKE W.	HUTCHINSON G.	RICHARDSON J.
COLLINS S.	HUTCHINSON N.	RICHARDSON W.E.
COMPTON B.L.	HUTCHINSON W.	SHEARMAN W.
DARLOW A.	INSKIP B.	SPRIGGS F.
DEEBLE S.J.	KITCIENER J.	SURTEES R.
DELANEY J.	LINFORD A.W.	SYMONDS L.H.
DENNIS J.	MANNING J.	WHITFIELD F.
FELTS P.C.	MARSDEN D.J.	WHITFIELD A.P.
FOSTER A.	MARSDEN F.	WOODS F.T.
FOSTER E.	MOORE F.	

Details of the inscriptions

A Celebration of Norman Parry's Life with Potton History Society

There are fifty names recorded on our War Memorial relating to the 1914/18 War and twelve for the 1939/45 conflict. I collected all the information I could from the Memorials and passed this direct to Lynda at Barton-le-Clay, together with the names on the Memorial. My brother-in-law Keith Lawrence had (with his usual skill) made a sketch of the Memorial and I also sent a copy of this to her.

I was delighted to receive a letter from her with further information regarding several of the names and this caused me to carry out investigations of my own with several visits to the Library in Biggleswade to scan old copies of the Chronicle. I was able to collect a great deal of information from the Potton section of the paper, including details of a W. Boness who was reported drowned when the troopship "Royal Edward" was sunk in 1915.

Of course when one is looking at old newspaper reports, one gets distracted and several other events are reported such as a report of a visit to Potton School of a Sgt. Major Hutchinson who turned out to be the father of Jack Hutchinson, himself a war veteran. I was happy to pass on a copy of this report to Jack who was very grateful.

I now have details of forty six out of the fifty deaths of the 1914/18 War and five which are not on the Memorial, but are of local interest. The four I have not been able to trace are W.HILL, W.E.REYNOLDS, E.G.RICHARDSON and F.T.WOODS. I can find no details of only two of the 1939/45 conflict, A.R.EDWARDS and A.HUTCHINSON. If any one has any information on these I should be grateful to receive it.

I was also able to pass on details of the five names on Sutton Memorial including an airman, Maurice Barham who was killed on his first bombing mission.

K.W.Lawson, Jan 2002

Norman, who was in the RAF at the time, moved to Potton in 1972. Being used to moving around the world with the RAF, Potton was just another place to live, a dormitory town which didn't interest him very much. 1974 saw Norman leaving the RAF and working, first at Bedford and then locally at Biggleswade and by that time he was finding Potton a little more fascinating.

He had a keen interest in photography and joined the Gamlingay Photographic Society at Gamlingay Village College. At the same venue a course came along on Local History, the Cambridge Extra Mural Course, and Norman and his wife Vera joined, along with other people from Potton not known to Norman at the time. These were Patricia and Ralph Yates. This was completely separate and not directly to do with an important happening in Potton in 1977. But some of the students on that very course were to be founder members of the Potton History Society.

After the Silver Jubilee Celebration in 1977, a meeting was held to decide how to deal with the money raised. As a result of this, Patricia Yates called a meeting to form a History Society in the town. Norman was there, amongst others, and was voted on as Chairman. I believe he spoke, or made a suggestion, and got the job. This has been a very long-standing habit with the PHS Committee, make a suggestion and you land up doing it. This still exists and yet we still get suggestions.

The Society is 25 years of age this year and Norman served on the Committee and did a great deal of work during that 25 years. He was not only a founder member, but Chairman for the first 16 years and after a short break came back on the Committee for several of the last 9 years until his health would not allow him to continue.

Norman over the years built up a great deal of knowledge of Potton and its people and, fortunately for us, this knowledge is with us by way of the many projects and reports Norman has carried out or been involved with.

He had a great interest in local maps which eventually led him to the massive undertaking of his report on the Enclosures of Potton. He played a large part in our photographic collection; copying photos which were on loan to the Society as well as taking many new shots, developing them and indexing all the negatives we have.

In 1983 we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Great Fire of Potton of 1783, in which the Committee of the day all played a part. Norman put this work together into an audio-visual display which was shown in quite a few places around Bedfordshire and beyond. Norman created more audio-visual shows, including the Bedfordshire Festival at Jordan's Mill.

He started and carried out much work on the Churchyard Survey. This was for Bedfordshire County, but we also have the information in our archives. Amongst various other projects Norman was involved in recording the weather over the years and Public Houses in Potton, their locations, names, pictures or slides of the dwellings today, or if they still are a Public House.

Genealogy was another great interest of Norman's. Because of this we have a wealth of information on Potton and its folk and on the surrounding villages. From census materials and Parish records there is a lot of information on Potton people, where they moved to, family history, jobs and much more. After his retirement he did voluntary work for Bedford Record Office. During this time he gleaned much information on Potton and kept the Society updated on Record Office matters.

Norman was responsible for collecting material and typing it ready for the editor to compile into our newsletter. He frequently wrote articles himself, based on the results of his extensive research in the Record Office, and using the internet as a source once he was confined to his home.

Norman also played a more general role in local history in our area. He was on the Committee of the East Bedfordshire Group of Local History Societies and when this was amalgamated into the Bedfordshire Local History Association he served with them for several years.

We have always been blessed with an active Committee and Society Members over the years. Some of Norman's achievements were gained with the help of others, quite a few on his own, even when he wasn't well until only perhaps two or three months from his death, he was still beavering away.

Norman, along with his committee, made the foundation on which this Society now stands so strongly, he contributed ceaselessly in helping to build it, he spent sixteen years leading it, and the whole of nearly twenty-five years putting in much time and a great deal of hard work.

Sadly Norman passed away on Tuesday 4th December 2001.

We will miss Norman, as a person, a fatherly figure and someone who has done a lot and gained much knowledge about Potton and its people over the years. However, as much of his work has been recorded in reports and other archive material, we will always be reminded of him and the contribution he made to local history.

George Howe, Chairman

Edward Hutchinson and Gordon Jack Hutchinson

Edward Hutchinson, father of Gordon Jack Hutchinson, was the third son of Mr and Mrs G. Hutchinson of the Railway Crossing, Potton. He joined the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment in 1895 at the age of sixteen years and had 24 years service in the Army. He reached the rank of Company Sergeant Major.

His seven medals included two in the Boer South African War with six bars for service in the following engagements: Wittebergen, Diamond Hill, Johannesburg, Drifuntein, Paardeberg and the Relief of Kimberley. In the 1st World War he was awarded the D.C.M.; Mons Star, Victory Medal, Mentioned in Despatches three times, Long Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal. The citation for his Distinguished Conduct Medal reads:

"After the enemy had gained a footing at an adjacent point of the trench he displayed great bravery and skill in organising counter attacks and in stopping very determined efforts by the enemy to extend their holding."

His long service was ended by poison gas at Loos, from which he never fully recovered.

Edward died in the Locomotive Public House, Deepdale in 1927 aged forty-eight.

Gordon Jack Hutchinson, the second son of Edward joined the Army in May 1940 and served with the 75th Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery for six years.

The Regiment (and Jack) were first in Africa and then took part in the invasion of Sicily and from there, the invasion of Italy. He was wounded in the attack on Monte Cassino and spent the next six months in hospital and was convalescent in Bari Soutten, Italy. He rejoined the Regiment in Italy and stayed with them until he was discharged in 1946 having served six years almost to the day.

His five medals include the Italian Star, North Africa Star and the Sicily Star. The action in which he was wounded reads:

"Lord Newport's party was split by heavy mortar and shell fire and failed to get across the river, when Signal Sergeant G.J.Hutchinson was wounded."

Jack Hutchinson

This account was written for the Society Archives to accompany a photograph of the framed collection of the medals described, which we hope to have on display at our local evening in August. The medals have been mounted alongside photographs of Jack and his father. Some of you will know that Jack has long been a member of this Society and has regaled us on many occasions with his memories of Potton and it's inhabitants and of the tanning industry which once thrived here. Ed.

--oo0oo--

Advertising as an Art Form

Taken from "Worcestershire in Olden Times", by John Noake. Published by Longman and Co, in 1849.

"To Persons about to Marry

Vincent Cook
California House, Broad Street,
Worcester,

Is pleased to introduce the following lines to his extensive circle of very worthy patrons:

Gentle pair! ere Hyman binds you
In his fetters soft but sure,
Pray bethink you, have you any
Good substantial furniture?

Love's a fickle God, they tell us,
Giddy pated, lightly led;
Therefore it were well you found him
In a comfortable bed.

Olive branches soon will blossom
Round your table, two and three,
And that table should be made of
Good and strong mahogany.

If the cares of life should gather-
And we all must look for cares-
Sorrow falls extremely lightly
In the midst of rosewood chairs.

Few that walk can scrape a stumble,
Thus hath said the prophet king;
But your fall will be a light one
On a Brussels carpeting.
We can keep your little children
From collision with the grate;
We have wardrobes, we have presses,
At a reasonable rate;

Mirrors for the queen of beauty,
Basins of the purest stone,
Ottomans which Cleopatra
Might have envied on her throne.

Seek us ere you taste with rapture
Love's first draught of filter'd honey,
And you'll find the safest plan is,
No DISCOUNT and READY MONEY!

Plagiarius.

They don't write 'em like that any more! Vera Parry

If Only Bricks Could Talk!

Magazine covers worry editors. All the unseen hours of work can be wasted if a poor design causes potential buyers to leave their money in their pockets and ignore the carefully produced pages of content. Sleepless nights are spent as countless neurones interact in the editorial brain attempting to crystallise the next blend of eye catching text and images.

The summer 2001 cover of 'Bedfordshire Country Life' stopped me in my tracks. Never before had the building I had been born in been the subject of a magazine cover! 18, Market Square, Potton, Bedfordshire has been occupied by an ironmonger for over 150 years. The building has seen over two centuries of life pass by its walls. I have been just a small part of its history. As a young boy I used to play in the attics and I would occasionally look out over the Market Square and wonder what changes the building had seen.

If only bricks could talk what stories they could tell! In the absence of genetically modified clay my researches into the building in which I grew up have revealed a fascinating story which will occupy (the editor willing) a series of articles featuring some of the changes which one Bedfordshire building has seen.

Rebirth from the Ashes.

I owe the building of my birth to an Icelandic volcano. In June 1783 a massive eruption at Mount Laki in south-eastern Iceland produced the greatest famine the island has ever known with up to a quarter of the human population dying. In Paris the young Benjamin Franklin recorded an exceptional change in the weather with coloured skies, a strange permanent fog and abnormal heat. Franklin was one of the first to link volcanic eruptions with climate change. The summer of 1783 was very hot and the risk of fire in thatched and wooden buildings rose.

Back in Bedfordshire disaster struck Potton on the 14th August 1783. The Morning Herald & Daily Advertiser of August 18th records the event:-

On Thursday, at 3 o'clock, a clover stack of Mr Edwards, Baker, of Potton, took fire, which communicated to every house on both sides of the street that leads to the church, not one being left standing:- The Crown; The George; and every house almost as far as Mr Sheffield's; The Dog Alehouse; Kitchens's the Bakery, Wime's the Grocers, with all their stock in trade. Mr Raymond's the butcher's house with all his stock in trade and all the outhouses in the back street are burnt down; nothing is left standing but the building that the clock is placed on. Mr Skegg's; the Horseshoe; The Swan; the corner house; and the Butchers shambles; that row of houses atop of the market where Mr Frankin the apothecary formerly lived at present are safe; but God knows how long they may continue so, as it still keeps breaking out in fresh places. To hear the cries of the distressed sufferers would melt a heart of stone; some have not a bed to lie on, and others destitute of money to purchase one. Without assistance the town must be entirely ruined. The fire was so extremely rapid that they had scarcely time to save anything, and the little that they did save was broke to pieces.

Thus it was that a property, 'formerly the White Hart', surrendered by Ephraim Wilson in 1765 to Henry Winn, Grocer and Chandler, was 'consumed by fire' in 1783 at an estimated loss of £629 15s 7d. The total loss of property in Potton was estimated at £25,000 when an average labourer might expect to earn less than two shillings a week. An appeal was set in motion which collected in over £6,000 in little over three months from London to Liverpool, illustrating a wide range of connections for a small market town of little over 1000 souls. Bedfordshire donated £667 6s 8d towards the 'sufferers'.

The money from the appeal helped rebuild Potton. By 1790 Thomas Hill, Bricklayer and Grocer, had rebuilt and the town had begun to recover. The new bricks looked out onto a scene painted in the 1820's by Thomas Fisher in which the rebuilt market building or Potton Shambles looked confidently forward into the new century. The ornamental pole celebrated the great victory at Waterloo and the catastrophe of the Great Fire was slipping away from living memory.

Without the volcanic eruption in Iceland the summer of 1783 there may have been no 'Great Fire of Potton' to produce modern new buildings and a renewal of local pride. The Market Square would have developed in other ways and I might never have become interested in Local History! Buildings develop a character from their owners which develops with the passage of time. The bricklayers who helped create the present 'Tysoe's' building bequeathed an inheritance for future Pottonians. Future articles will reveal how it was used by an unbroken sequence of Ironmongers.

The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of his colleagues in the Potton History Society and in particular Patricia Yates and Norman Parry who provided some of the original research upon which this article is based. The author can be contacted at pjibbett@aol.com.
Peter Ibbett

Read All About It!

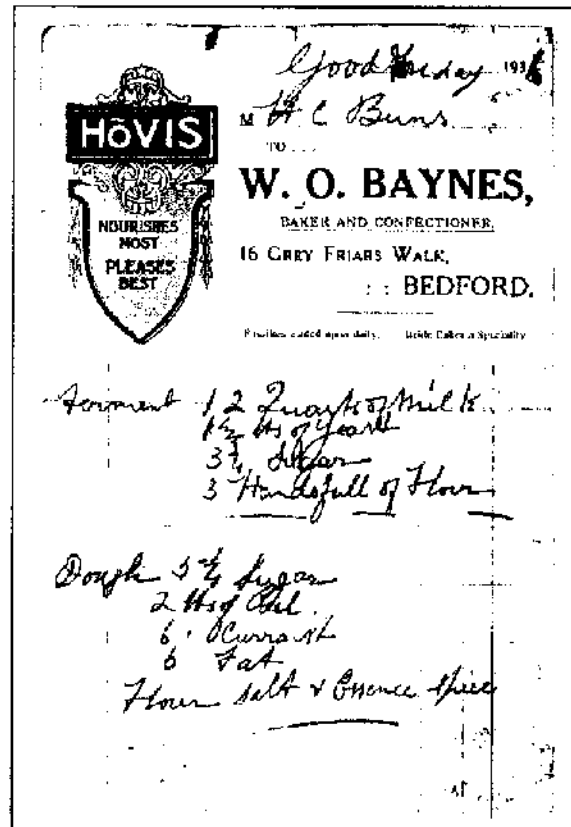
For those newcomers who are intrigued by Peter's references to the fire, we are pleased to announce that a reprint of our publication 'Great Fire of Potton 1783' compiled by Peter Ibbett is now available. Jean McLennan has been able to produce a small number of reprints and these are on sale at only £2.50.

The original is already a collectors item!

A Little Bit of Family History

Willie Oliver Baynes was my Gran's brother, christened 'Willie' not William, born at Cambridge, spent his boyhood days at Moss's Farmhouse in Helions Bumpstead, Essex. Eventually the family moved to Bradford where he was apprenticed to Mr Mann, a Master Baker and Confectioner. Willie became a Master Baker himself. He purchased the business and goodwill from Mr Mann (Bromham Road, Bedford) for £20 and carried on his own business at Greyfriars Walk, a narrow lane with terraced cottages, now developed.

I've been told that Willie was known locally as 'the midnight baker' because of the long hours he worked in the bakehouse. Also



some of the locals in the terraced houses in Greyfriars Walk would pay Willie a small fee for him to pop their Sunday dinners in his oven whilst they went to Sunday morning service.

In those days, Hot Cross Buns were only made once a year for Good Friday so it would seem that he kept this recipe for this occasion.

Keith Lawrence

NOTICE BOARD

Jubilee Celebrations

As the Queen celebrates her Golden Jubilee in the year 2002 so Potton History Society celebrates its Silver Jubilee. Watch out for details of our special celebration dinner.

--0000--

2003 Programme

Planning will start soon for our 26th season of monthly meetings. Any suggestions will be welcome.

--0000--

Publicity

www.LocalToday.co.uk is a free service for all. It provides a postcode centred weekly newsletter on local events. Our meetings will be posted on this site as well as Beds on Sunday and Radios B97 and Chiltern. Please let me know of any other free sites for advertising our meetings.

Peter Ibbett, Publicity Secretary

--0000--

Newsletter no. 33

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome. Please pass items to Vera Parry, Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue will be 1st August 2002.