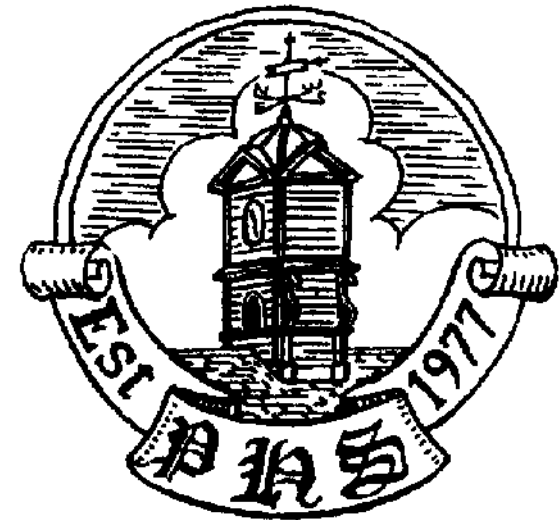


Botton History Society



Newsletter Number 38 Spring 2005

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Potton History Society Committee:-

Chairman	George Howe
Secretary	Jean McLennan
Treasurer	Anita Lewis
Programme/Publicity Secretary	Peter Ibbett
	Ken Lawson
	Christine Harper
Newsletter Editor	Mary 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 appreciation to Camerons Newsagents for selling our books and to Potton Post Office for selling our tea towels.

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

Lindsay's Bakery,
Tysoe's Hardware Store,
Potton Library
Potton Post Office

Society News

The **October** meeting welcomed David Short from Ashwell who provided a talk on his research into how wills can reveal the living conditions of our ancestors. These can reveal the basic structure of a house as well as its owner's main possessions. A selection of wills from 1632 to 1716 showed a general rise in overall wealth reflected in the quality of items in a home rather than the quantity of them. Most people had only two or three seasonal changes of clothes with basic kitchen and bedroom materials. Several wills referred to 'other trash' to cover small items of little value. A word that seems an American invention was in common use in England before being taken over the Atlantic and retained by the settlers while falling out of use in this country!

The AGM in **November** heard Chairman George Howe report on another year of good progress with well attended meetings and progress on developing the growing Archives. The Society has a full programme of events for 2005 including a coach trip and a celebration of the foundation of the Land Settlement in 1935.

The AGM was followed by a presentation by Peter Ibbett who supplied members with a transcript of the Heads of Households in the 1901 Census for Potton. There were 2003 people in Potton of whom 67% had been born in Potton. This was a high level compared to previous Census information. Two families, the Hutchinsons and the Richardsons made up 8% of the population, with the most common names being William and Mary. Labourers made up 30% of the working population, which included 50 Market Gardeners. A copy of the transcript can be provided from pjibbett@aol.com.

In **December** Peter Ibbett gave a digital presentation to show how photographs and documents can be scanned into a computer and saved as space saving files on CDs. One item used was a photographic album showing the Potton Tannery in the early 1970's.

George Howe showed a selection of Video clips of events and activities in Potton. This included footage of early Society walks as well as the more recent Jubilee celebrations. Other items included musical entertainment in the town. The Society has a growing collection of material that it intends to convert into digital files and would welcome anyone who would like to contribute to this work.

An account of basket making featured in our **January** meeting. Bill Wittering, who took up the craft on retirement from Forestry duties, outlined the history from the earliest baskets, probably 10,000 years ago right through the ages. The growing techniques and preparation of willows was explained and a range of self-made baskets was on display, to demonstrate the variety of objects that one man could produce.

A late spell of winter weather meant that our advertised speaker was not able to reach us in **February**. True to form, George Howe and Peter Ibbett raided the archives to find photos, documents and artefacts on the planned subject of the local Home Front in WW2. The ensuing discussion, led by our intrepid duo, encouraged many members of the audience to relate their own memories of the period, thus adding much valuable information to the archives, via the cassette recorder. Further memories of that time, from two of our members, can be seen in this newsletter on pages 16 and 20.

March 2005 marked the 70th anniversary of the arrival in Potton of the first men to take part in the Land Settlement Association scheme to re-settle redundant coalfield workers into a self-employed country lifestyle. Our speaker, Peter Clarke, grew up on one of the smallholdings and his extensive research into the history of the scheme provided a fascinating evening. The LSA scheme was the dreamchild of Sir Malcolm Stewart, who lived at The Lodge in Sandy. He bought 2 farms in Potton, which he donated to provide the land for the initial homesteads. Participants were obliged to work to a rigid set of guidelines and to sell all their produce through the LSA. Very few made the transition successfully.

We would like to welcome the following new members to the Society: -

Peter Downman of Canada

Kerstin Michaels

Mr Sparks

And welcome back to

Boo Matthews who has recently rejoined the Society

Digital Archive

2005 will see the Society develop its Archive by starting to create a Digital Archive. Contact our Chairman, George Howe, if you would like to help with work on our Archive or inputting data into the Society Computer.

Up Date on the Potton Car.

Thanks to one of our members, Brian Ritchie, a restorer of old cars, our car has received some more attention. Brian has done some tweaking around the engine, adjustments etc. A big problem with the petrol pump has been overcome, and fuel pipes renewed. Brake pipes and fluid seen to, brakes adjusted and now work well. Tony Crossley will be particularly pleased about this, as he will well remember in 1996 when he brought the car back to Potton, and took it off the trailer, the brakes never worked at all. Luckily nothing was in the way before the hand brake came into play.

So, we have a car that not only can stop, but with the work Brian has put into the car it will now start, and can be driven again. There is more work to be done, but we have reached a milestone in the cars restoration to see her running again. This is very good for a fifty two-year-old lady.

Hopefully we can show her at a couple of rallies this year. Little Eva might not be what is termed as a classic car but she is full of history and when on show always makes the heads turn and is the cause of many a question to be asked. A car which is full of interest.

George Howe

Forthcoming Programme

- May 26th **The Apple Orchards Project** Sue Hutcheson
The East of England Apples and Orchards project aims to save our rich orchard fruits heritage and supports local and private growers
- Jun 23rd **Potton Traders – Can they survive** Joanna Faul
This evening contrasts the past history of traders in Potton with the ‘Tastes of Beds’ project to support 21st century local traders
- Jun 26th **Coach trip to Flag Fen**
See Notice Board on back page for details
- Jul 28th **Town Walks – Shed & Barn Survey**
Join a guided walk to help record how many barns and sheds are left in Potton.
*7.30 start at Community Centre
- Aug 25th **Family History Evening**
Who lived in your house? Which family members lived in Potton. Come and find out about the wealth of information in our archives.
- Sep 22nd **Local Milestones and Turnpikes** Michael Knight
A member of the Milestones Society reveals what can still be found in our area from the Turnpike era.
- Oct 27th **The Plight of the poor in 1800** David Short
David Short reveals what it was really like to work on the land in the late Georgian era in the Ashwell area of Hertfordshire
- Nov 24th **On the Road in 1910** Peter Ibbett
A bound volume of ‘The Motor’ from 1910 reveals what was happening on our roads 95 years ago
*7.30 start for AGM
- Dec 8th **Pictorial Entertainment**
The traditional end of year selection from our growing archives

Music Making in Potton.

You may remember the above was the title of our September meeting last year. This brought memories of the many musical groups we have had over the years in Potton. We are blessed with quite a few groups to this day, many which have been going for over the last twenty years. We enjoyed some tales from representatives of these groups, relating how they started, the places they performed, both in this country, and abroad, and awards they had won.

It was the content of this meeting that caused me to look at our 1982 Potton charity show video, when I was choosing items for our Pictorial evening last December. This video is full of local musical groups performing at that show. I have always wanted to bring those acts into our programme. Following our 'Music making in Potton' meeting was the perfect time. This video contains many if not all the groups we talked about that evening. A perfect chance to show excerpts of these acts. The show back in 1982 brought many groups in Potton together to make a two and a half hour show, and was staged for two nights.

I took the video to Patricia Yates to view, and this prompted both Patricia, and I to want to know more about the show, and video. Who took the video, who was the compare, etc. etc. Some answers of who did what are on the video, but others are not.

George Howe.

Charity Concert - 1982

On February 26th 1982, I attended a Charity Concert held in Burgoyne School. Produced by David Lester, who was assisted by Alan Davies, Stage Manager, and Tony Joel, Lighting, it was a splendid opportunity for the audience to fully appreciate a wide variety of Potton talent. The School Hall was attractively decorated with large posters advertising past social events. They form part of The 'Cox Collection' held by Potton History Society.

Andrew Johnson, a member of St, Mary's Singers, acting as Compere, ably introduced each contribution which lasted approximately ten minutes, but a television-video link had been installed by Adrian Smith, the Technical Designer, in a nearby classroom, enabling the artists to enjoy the programme whilst awaiting their turn.

Recently I was able to view the excellent video produced by Adrian, which brought back many enjoyable memories of this unique event. Consulting the Potton Scrap Book for 1982, I was delighted to find a programme which not only gave details of each contribution, but also information about the participants, namely. Potton Salvation Army Band, Conductor Richard Whitmore; Folk Club Players; Phoenix, Conductor Linda Wood; Potton Salvation Army Rhythmic Group; Potton Playhouse, Director Pat Smith; Shannon Express, Conductor Ian Russell; Tessa Wood, solo pianist; Wesley West and Company; and St, Mary's Singers, Conductor Tom Pargeter, Accompanist, Tessa Wood. A performance of Handel's Zadoc the Priest, in which all the artists took part, brought this inspired programme to a fitting conclusion.

On presenting a cheque for £615.95 to the Sue Ryder Foundation at Moggerhanger, David Lester's comment was that, not only did the home benefit, 'but the Show was intended to make us all, whether performer or audience, more aware of the wide range of activities going on around us'. Happily the remark 'wide range of activities' is increasingly evident in the Potton of the twenty-first century.

To be able to link a video of 1982 with a programme and newspaper cuttings recorded in a Scrapbook of the same date, emphasises the value of continuing to retain reports of 'the present' which only too rapidly becomes 'the past'.

Patricia R. Yates. February 2005

If only bricks could talk! – Part 6
The Life and Times of a Potton shop -
Ledgers and Catalogues above the Office desk

The bricks of my childhood home may not be able to talk but the dusty ledgers that were filled in day by day in the little office in the Ironmongers shop contain fascinating information. Day in and day out in the 1920's and 1930's Henry Tysoe and Harry Browning logged in every transaction, providing us with a business thermometer from the depression and war years.

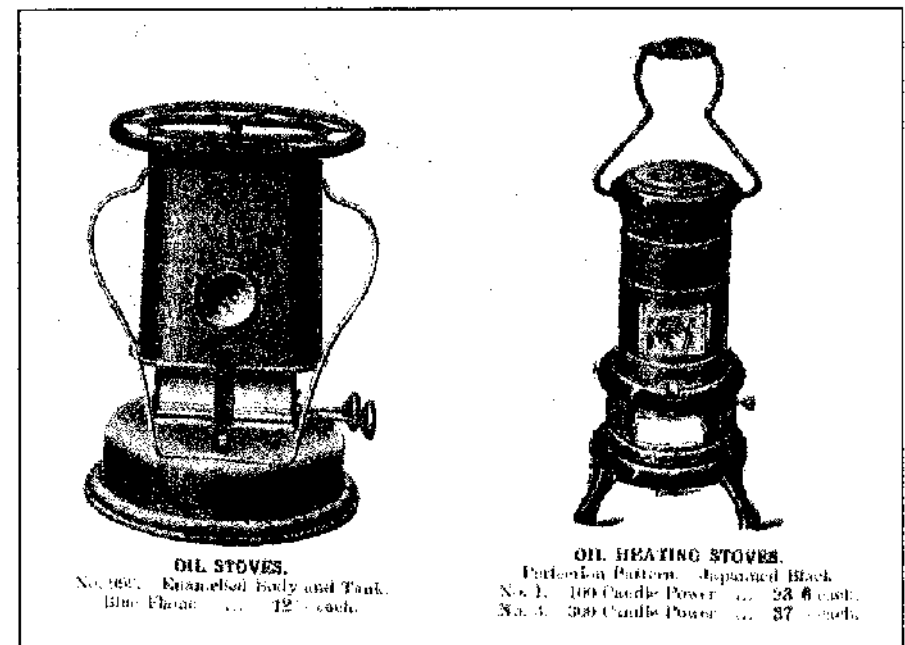
One little black ledger, purchased from Wells and Son at the Steam Printing and Paper Works of St Neots, was begun in 1914 and records expenditure into the 1930's. The sample page from 1924 shows the mixture of payments to local and national suppliers of goods. London, Birmingham, Bolton and Coventry supplied goods via the railway system for the needs of Pottonians. Together with information from another ledger the profitability of the shop over two decades can be traced: -

<i>Year</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Profit</i>
1911	£1097	£931	£166
1912	£1200	£1080	£120
1913	£1184	£1054	£130
1914	£968	£770	£198
1915	£771	£615	£156
1916	£808	£605	£203
1917	£617	£437	£181
1918	£798	£640	£158
1919	£996	£867	£129
1920	£1529	£1504	£22
1921	£1356	£1167	£189
1922	£1188	£999	£185
1923	£1076	£916	£160
1924	£1020	£891	£159
1925	£912	£780	£132

<i>Year</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Profit</i>
1926	£943	£799	£144
1927	£861	£719	£142
1928	£808	£601	£209
1929	£698	£539	£159
1930	£588	£432	£156

Although one must treat these raw figures with caution they appear to show the effect of the 1st World War in depressing the volume of trade and a recovery in the early 20's before a steady decline in sales as the economic depression of the 30's looms. The figures also show good management on Henry Tysoe's part as he balances his income and expenditure.

Another feature of the shelves in the little office was the catalogues that manufacturers sent around the country to gain business. These were produced to high standards that reflected the care put into the products. The illustration is from a 1927 Furnishing and General Ironmongery Catalogue of 258 pages produced by Calver & Sons of Lambeth Hill in London.



Potton in the 20's and 30's declined both in population and as a market town. The young 1780's bricks of the shop had looked out onto a refurbished Potton Shambles which reflected local confidence in a prosperous future. Now in the 1920's the main reminder of 'the good old days' was the annual Horse Fair. In 1932 a local paper reported: -

'Potton Horse Fair was held on Monday but for the first time in its history not a solitary horse was offered for sale. The name is all that remains to remind the older generation of the days when it was famed over half England and even attracted buyers from the continent. Mr Jack Reynolds of 2 Oak Crescent endeavoured to supply the deficiency in horseflesh. Shortly after noon, on hearing that not a solitary animal had been offered for sale, he arrived at the Square with 'Drintyre'. A large crowd, principally composed of the younger generation, quickly gathered. Mr Reynolds, whose horse bore the Wells and Winch rosette, frequently belaboured it with a heavy horse dog whip, but it preserved an immovable passivity. Finally, having failed to attract a purchaser, he had to push it back to the 'Chequers' upon its wooden wheels.'

Thus the watching bricks, which had been bathed in the smells and sounds of the horse fair every year, saw its passing with a final flourish of local humour. Now the mechanical horse, the motor car, was providing a new sound amongst the decaying market buildings of a passing era. The photograph shows the shop looking out over a market square with its central Shambles building and its small lock-up shops. Where once horses were lined up outside the Rose & Crown for sale, motor cars are parked, forerunners of our era of mass personal mobility.

The little ledger, its pages covered with the neat and meticulous handwriting of Henry Tysoe, has its own sad memorial to its original owner. On its last page are recorded the funeral expenses (£14 3 4) of Henry who died on Nov 16th 1930.

<i>Certificate from</i>		<i>J W Bird Potton,</i>	
<i>Registrar</i>	£0 5s 3d	<i>Funeral</i>	£3 8s 6d
<i>Railway Fares</i>	2s 8d	<i>Burton (Grocer)</i>	7s 1d
<i>Hoods. Money Order</i>	£4 2s 7d	<i>Richardson (Baker)</i>	10s 2d
<i>Methodist Times</i>	3s 0d	<i>Bond-Smith (Ham)</i>	17s 7d
<i>Commission</i>	7d	<i>Oliver (Meal)</i>	17s 9d
<i>Geddings (Burial)</i>	£1 0s 0d	<i>Rail Fare Mr Sills</i>	1s 0d
<i>Clarke (Burial)</i>	£1 0s 0d	<i>Electric Bulb 20W</i>	2s 2d
<i>Stamps (Cards re</i>	5s 0d	<i>Miss Gardiner Wages</i>	£1 0s 0d
<i>Funeral)</i>			

Harry Browning saw the shop through the depression of the 30's. The bricks of the shop were to hear a new dialect from the North-East as unemployed Durham miners were given a chance of a new life on land donated by Malcolm Stewart to form a Land Settlement Association. The ledgers in the office record a steady rise of daily takings from £431 in 1932 to £2238 in 1947 as the shop remained one of the cornerstones of trade in the town

But times were changing yet again. The end of the war was to see new owners, with the arrival of my parents, at what was to be the start of nearly half a century of service to Potton behind the counter at Tysoe's.

Peter Ibbett

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

The Sod. Trodden by Ancient Feet – Part 2 Mr Shotliff's Visit.

A letter arrived from the Bedfordshire County Archaeological Service on 10th June 1999 identifying the bronze ring as a cast copper alloy ring and was probably a harness fitting or terret ring. Such finds have an extended period of use, from the late Iron Age/Roman period to the post-medieval period, and are commonly recovered from rural excavations. The letter added 'The dating of such objects can be problematic, as it's form has varied very little over it's period of use. However, given the quantity of pottery from a similar area in Biggleswade it is possible it may be from that Roman period'. It was then that a meeting was requested by the Archaeological Project Manager, Mr. Drew Shotliff, so we arranged to meet on my allotment site on the 18th of June 1999.

When we met on my plot Mr. Shotliff soon picked up a few more shards and he showed me what to look for. His visit enabled me to get my eye in – so to speak. Before Mr. Shotliff departed he said, "Keep looking, I expect to hear from you again." Then off he went with a couple of Tom Thumb lettuces in his hand.

Thereafter I was eagle eyed in my search for fresh finds as I turned over each stone. It wasn't long before I realised that those elusive shards don't just jump out at you and so my initial enthusiasm was soon dulled and I reverted to concentrating back to harvesting my 'Historical Plot', still turning up the, now ordinary, service buttons. (Life gets tedious, don't it?) However, I soon found the best time to look for shards was on the surface after a good rain, this washed the soil from the fragments leaving them almost pristine. But even so, with my crops now fully grown their foliage screened the ground beneath. At that point 'Patience is a Virtue' came to mind.

Digging potatoes also brought the occasional shard to the surface and so my finds began to mount up. I drew sketches of those first samples for my own record. I also drew up a plan of my allotment

so that I could record where they were found. However, I started but I didn't finish, because I realised that the samples I was finding had, over time, been turned over and over by the plough, by the scuffle, by the harrow, by the drill and any other farming implement that may have worked the soil. Therefore, the exact location of their original position when in use was subject to pure speculation. Never the less the fact that these shards were numerous scattered about the area suggested to me a farmed location, or a small villa's presence here, prior to the arrival of the Saxons on their near-by settlement. So although my initial expectation of a major find had, for now been curtailed I still kept my eyes focussed on any object that seemed out of the ordinary. The realisation that just one broken pot can produce so many shards to make up one whole pot, tempered my expectations.

Having taken my first batch of shards into St. Mary's Archaeological Centre for identification my enthusiasm was given a new lease of life when I received Mr. Shotliff's letter of reply (23rd March 2000) in which he thanked me for calling in with the latest finds on my allotment. He continued 'Again the pottery is nearly all Roman. It includes fragments of storage jars, mixing



bowls, dishes and amphora (for holding wine or other liquids). There were also two fragments of Roman building material: roof tile and a tile used in the construction of a hypocaust (under floor heating)'. He added 'The pieces are all

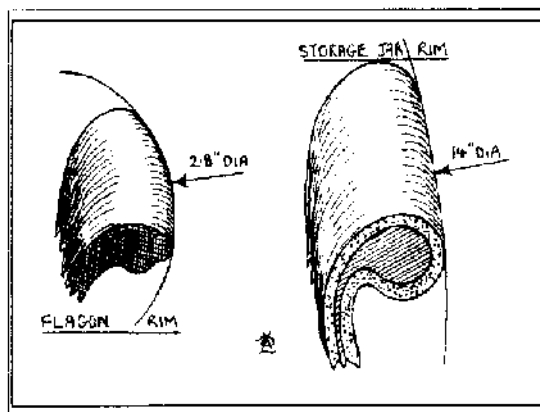
very battered and abraded. They have clearly been "knocking around" in the plough soil for centuries'. I considered this very encouraging and my 'Quest for the Holy Grail' gained added impetus.

Shards Galore.

Throughout 2001 I had picked up one hundred and six shards from my plot and by now I was recording my finds with my camera. First cleaning them in water and then gently brushing them with an old tooth brush, when dry I set them out to photograph before taking them to St. Mary's Archaeological Centre at Bedford.

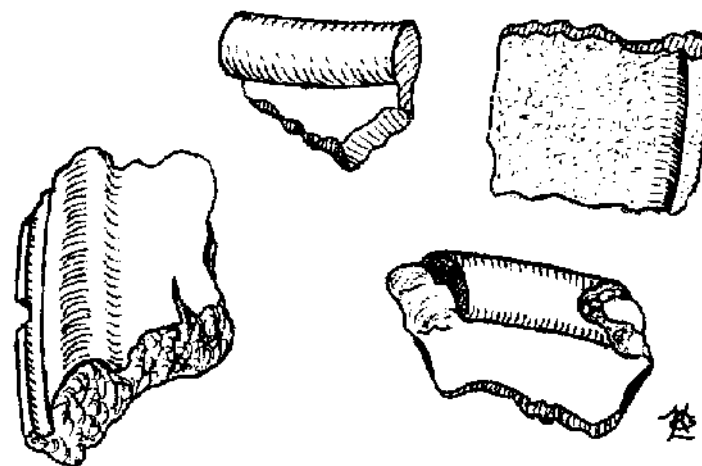
Although I discontinued marking my finds on the layout of my plot it was clear that my finds tended to be nearest and adjacent to plot number three, separated by my row of raspberry canes. Amongst these canes I found a seedling of a gooseberry bush growing, no doubt the seed was deposited there by a bird, so I left it to mature before moving it to the end of my black-currant bushes near my path in the Autumn of 2001.

By far the most interesting shard I found was on February 15th of that year. In size it was approximately one and three eighths by two inches and about three sixteenth of an inch thick. I thought it was of a recent period, it looked so fresh and new. It had an elaborate pattern on its outer face and was made of a fine-grained terracotta fabric. I took this shard to the Archaeological Centre, along with my other finds, on March 13th 2001. I was amazed to be told that this piece was in fact Roman and came from Gaul, and I thought it was modern! I still wonder what the whole bowl must have looked like. I'm sure it must have been treasured by its owner.



fact Roman and came from Gaul, and I thought it was modern! I still wonder what the whole bowl must have looked like. I'm sure it must have been treasured by its owner.

Amongst the variety of shards found that year, only about fifteen could be classed as the rim of a pot, bowl, dish or a jar and all were different, either from rim cross section, potter's fabric or the size of its outside curve. Calculations of their curve only gave an approximation because no complete rim is perfectly round. A simple card I made with radii drawn from one inch radius upwards in half inch steps up to seven inch radius seemed to cover the rim segments found. The seven inch gave a fourteen inch diameter rim –



a very large storage jar indeed, whereas the one inch gave a two inch diameter rim – a suitable size for a flagon.

So it was obvious the samples from just my plot alone covered quite a large range of household pottery. The variations of the clay fabric with its mixed inclusions of grit or shell, together with variations in firing and slip coating produced a wide range of colours, from off-white, grey, through terracotta red to black. Also a range of decorative glazes added more variety.

Keith Lawrence

To be continued

Potton Home Guard

Following your request in the Autumn 2004 Newsletter, I have put together some memories I have of the Home Guard in Potton and hope that others will be able to add to it in later issues.

I asked to leave school in March 1940. April 1st would be my 14th birthday and the first day of the new term. The schools were in a bit of crisis at the time as we had a lot of evacuee children arrived in Potton who needed teaching so perhaps that's why they let me go.

I was living with my parents on the Land Settlement in Potton, and because my father wasn't in the best of health I used to help him on the smallholding. We had pigs and poultry and greenhouses for tomatoes as well as land where we grew beans, peas, carrots, potatoes – all sorts of vegetables which went through the Land Settlement for sale. I was a strapping young lad and useful for the heavy work on what was deemed to be an essential occupation so when it came to call-up I would be exempt. Wanting to get in on the action I enrolled for the Home Guard. I told them I was 18 and nobody queried that, although my paper work shows that I was a month short of my 16th birthday when I joined up.

I was in the Signals section of the platoon of the Home Guard Infantry Regiment. We used to meet twice a week on Wednesday night and Sunday morning in a hut at the top of Bury Hill. We learned Morse Code and used to lay telephone lines on a Sunday morning by threading wire round cotton reels and attaching them to the telegraph poles which connected different Home Guard outposts together so that we were aware of what was going on. I remember one outpost in Everton Road, it was a disused house that the Home Guard took over, we put sandbags up at all the windows so that if the worst came to the worst we could have used it as a firing point. The 'signals' didn't get issued guns but the infantry section had World War I rifles (Lee Enfields) and they had some machine guns as well. We had Khaki uniforms, boots, army greatcoats and caps issued to us. There were about a dozen of us in the signals section.

Once we went out on manoeuvres to John Ream's Portobello Farm at Sutton. His father Mr. Tommy Ream was the Major in charge of the 'B' Company (about two or three hundred men) and Lieutenant Colonel The Hon Michael Bowes-Lyon was the Officer in Charge of the 2nd Battalion Home Guard. We camped overnight and all of a sudden in the middle of the night we felt the canvas touching our faces and realised that someone from one of the other tents had pulled the guide ropes down. We had to run around in our underpants in the moonlight putting the tent back up!

In July 1944 the Queen came to Fairfield, Biggleswade to inspect the Battalion – The Hon Michael Bowes-Lyon was her cousin or brother. It was reported in the Biggleswade Chronicle at the time, we all had to march past. It was a day to remember.

The Home Guard in Potton, or, throughout the County was never really needed for action, but we were prepared as best we could for invasion.

R.G.Darlow

--oo0oo--

Martin Deacon from the Record Office supplied the following list of **Potton Local Area Civil Defence Buildings 1939-45**. Does anyone remember them?

- ARP Warden's Post at purpose built brick building in Market Square.
- ARP Warden's Post at Home Farm, Horne Lane.
(Mr A.C. Andrews)
- Ambulance and Rescue Car Garage at Chequers Inn, Brook End.
- Rescue Party & Upgraded First Aid Point, Linden Lodge.
(Dr Anderson)
- Sutton had an ARP Warden's Post at the Rectory Stables.

Overleaf can be seen copies of documents that accompanied Bob's article.

SPECIAL ORDER
OF THE DAY

Decorated with
the Victoria Cross
in 1918 and 1919
for Gallantry

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

July 31st, 1964.

To - Lieut.-Colonel The Hon. Michael Bowes-Lyon.

It gave me great pleasure to visit the
Battalion of the Home Guard under your command
on July 29th.

I was much impressed by the appearance
of all ranks, and by their admirable steadiness
and courage. Their arm drill was exceptionally
good, and as I went down the ranks, I thought with
pride and admiration of the splendid spirit of
loyalty and determination which brought the Home
Guard into being during those critical days of
1940, and which carried it on until a great and
well-trained Army is now guarding our land.

This has only been achieved by the sacrifice of
much leisure and the unselfish zeal of all ranks.

To all in the Battalion, I send my
heartfelt congratulations and good wishes.

Elizabeth R

In the years when our Country
was in mortal danger

George VI, 1940

who served from July 28th 1914 to 1916, and who
gave generously of his time and
powers to make himself ready
for her defence by force of arms
and with his life if need be.

George VI

THE HOME GUARD

Memories of World War Two at Potton

As I enter my 69th year, I cast my mind back to my boyhood days at Potton, during World War Two. I was four years old when the war began and ten by the time it ended. My Mother, Sister and I lived at 19 Bury Hill (now, I think, No. 62), my Father being away in Africa and Italy with the 8th Army during this time. So, of course, I did not remember him until, fortunately, he came home after the war and we became a family again.

My memories of the war are various. We used to get American servicemen going in convoys through Potton and we children used to run after their trucks shouting 'Got any gum, chum?' Invariably, we got packets of gum thrown to us. On one occasion, on my Mother's birthday, the convoy stopped in Bury Hill and I told the G.I's that it was my Mother's Birthday and, unbelievably, someone produced a cake and said - 'there you are son, take this home for your mum'. 'Gee, thanks mister' I said and ran home with it. Unfortunately my Mother was not well and could not eat it! I had some of it, though!

One thing my Mother, Sister and I did was to count the planes at night as they went off to various locations in Europe and then get up early the next morning to count them home. There was always some missing. We got to know some of these air crew personally and dreaded the day one of them never came back. This did, of course, occur from time to time. I even have a ghost story attached to one of these young men. (Perhaps readers would like to hear it one day?)

I remember a plane crashing in the fields behind our house in Bury Hill and managed to get a piece of Perspex from it and kept it for ages. I remember a plane crashing in the woods near Cockayne Hatley and on another occasion saw a 'Doodle Bug' trundle across the Potton skyline.

I have memories of dances at the Manor, not that I went of course! They were attended, I believe, by many American Servicemen and some Canadians too. One Canadian became a good friend of our family.

He was stationed at Gransden and would cycle over to our home. He survived the war and went back to Nova Scotia. I wrote to him after the war and we corresponded for over 50 years and I still write to his widow to this day.

There were also two plane crashes over Potton, one in October 1944 and another in February 1945, on St Valentine's Day. Again, to this day, I write to the relatives of these air crew who were mostly Australians and New Zealanders. My wife and I lay flowers on their graves on the appropriate dates as they, the aircrew, are buried in the military part of the Newmarket Road Cemetery here in Cambridge, where I live.

Cyril Goldsmith

Thank you Cyril for sharing your memories and I am sure our readers would enjoy your 'ghost story'.

And a memory of another war with local connections



Potton to Sutton Circular Walk

Footpath 1 starts on the Biggleswade Road between the copse and the golf course (1). This footpath is on a map dating back to 1882. The first bridge you come to (2) is over what was possibly a tributary of the lake that was in the park, now the golf course since 1946. The second bridge (3) is over the brook. As this route is hardly used the path is difficult to follow and can become overgrown but continue with the golf course on your right. The 'Belts' or woods that bordered the path were thinned out a lot by Dutch Elm disease.

Further round there is a board giving details of **Pegnut Wood** (4). If you wish, turn left at this point onto the path which leads up to Footpath 2 and then back into Potton, for a much shorter circuit. For the full walk, follow on around the edge of the golf course. At the end of the Belt look to your right where the church and the old rectory come into view. Further down, the hedge on the left (5) which borders the school playing field was planted in the mid 1970's. The route leads on through the gardens of a block of cottages, over the stile (6) and onto **Sutton High Street**. On turning left, the school (7), which was built in 1870, is still going strong with some fifty children attending. The **John-O-Gaunt** pub (8) is opposite.

Carry on up to the **Old Post Office** (13) and turn left onto Footpath 2 (14), which is a much easier route and more interesting. Being in open space it is a different world, peace and quiet watching the birds and rabbits. This route is well signposted. A hedge on the right surrounds the **Bear Gardens** (15) that was the sight of village activities up until at least the 1800's and all the fields at that time were allotments right to Potton.

Following the footpath it comes back to **Pegnut Wood**, which has many species of poplar and other trees, including bushes for all sorts of habitat. The trees will be thinned out every six or seven years to allow the remainder to grow on. The wood is not wasted because

there are so many uses for it. Further along is a sign to the left, this takes you on the last lap of the walk.

At the end of the path is a kissing gate that takes you through into the bottom of **Sheepwalk Close** (16). Turn left along the backs of the houses, turn right at the end alongside the brook and out onto Bury Hill (17) next to the fire station (18). Turn left here and follow the path round to the Market Square.

A very enjoyable walk.

Christine Harper

