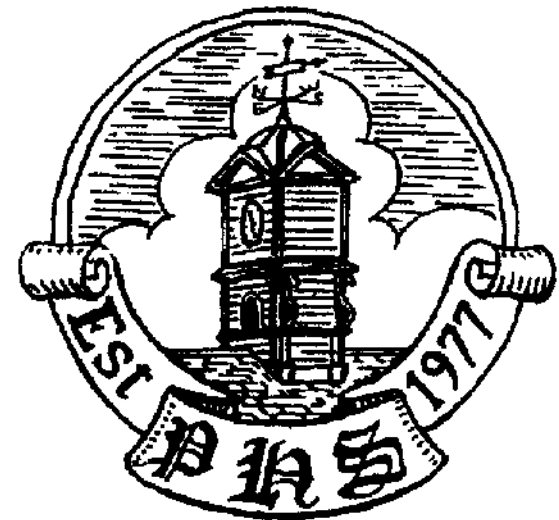


Dotton History Society



Newsletter Number 39 Autumn 2005

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For access to the archives in our research rooms
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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 **April** meeting featured James Symonds of Potton who became a nationally known bird photographer in the early 1900's. Local photographer Chris Gomersall used magazines and books to illustrate the methods and work of early bird photographers. James H Symonds had grown up in Potton and developed an interest in bird photography, even making his own camera. His work, including nationally praised photographs of Kingfishers, appeared in Country Life and other publications of the time. He was one of a group of amateur pioneers who learnt how to capture the daily life of birds without disturbing them or their habitat. His death in the First World War prevented his name from becoming better known.

In **May** we welcomed Sue Hutcheson from the East of England Apple and Orchards Project. Bedfordshire was a fertile breeding ground for both apple and pear varieties, with Thomas Laxton of Bedford exporting his trees all over the world. Today the variety of apples has declined dramatically with a 70% loss in the last 30 years. There are over 30 current Bedfordshire apple varieties but around 20 lost varieties, some of which may survive as old trees in gardens. Please contact the Project at applesandorchards.org.uk if you suspect you may have a lost apple tree! The Project supplied a display whilst we exhibited photographs and documents about the Cockayne Hatley Apple Orchards, a feature of the area in the mid 20th Century.

Our speaker for the **June** meeting was Joanna Faul from the Tastes of Bedfordshire project. She outlined how local traders and individuals can make the most of their local produce and services. The project had produced a Trade Directory of members. On display from the Society archives were copies of Potton Trade Directory entries from the last 200 years showing the variety of trades carried out in the Parish. Other archive material showed that Potton has always been a good centre for trade with Walter Compton recorded as a cordwainer in 1499 and John Stevenson making shoes in 1559.

An 1882 map of Potton was the basis for our **July** walk, when we looked at barns and storage buildings and the way their usage has changed over the last 125 years. We discovered that the town still has a good collection of barns as well as a couple of modern buildings reflecting a barn-like style. As of the most active market towns in the county, Potton had many barns around the Market Square and nearby streets, both for storage and also for local employment such as brewing, tanning, agricultural machinery and farming. Photographs illustrating the range of local barns were on display and we would welcome any additional photos or information that may be tucked away in your drawers and albums.

The display for our **August** meeting enabled members and visitors to examine a part of the growing collection of family based material. Peter Ibbett introduced the range of material, which included Census Returns, Cemetery Records, Trade Directories and eight files of documents on over forty local families. He also showed examples of how history can be written to capture the interest of those outside the family circle. The documents and files enabled people to check out details of local families and previous occupants of houses in the town. The Society would be very interested to hear from anyone with Potton Connections who could add photographs and memories to its files.

Michael Knight from the Milestone Society joined us in **September** to explain how, through a series of Acts of Parliament, several roads in this area became turnpiked in order to raise funds for their repair and upkeep. The Great North Road was the first to be dealt with in the early 1700's. This was followed in 1755 by the route of the B1040 through Potton to St Ives. One of the requirements of these Acts was the erection of milestones at intervals of one mile along the route. In 1814 came the turn of the route from Potton to Eynesbury although no milestones were stipulated here. Many of the milestones were removed during WW2 but have since gradually been found and reinstated.

Use of Archive Materials

The Society holds a variety of materials, some donated and some collected by members, to provide a Local History Archive for the benefit of all those connected with Potton.

The materials in the archive, which are kept on private property, may be viewed by appointment only, to support private research. They may not be used for commercial or personal gain without the written agreement of the committee of the Society (registered Charity No. 290895). The Society would appreciate a donation to its funds from users of its archives to help with maintaining and developing the collection.

Copies of items for which the Potton History Society holds the copyright in the archives can be provided at 50p per A4 copy or £4 for a photograph (£3 members) with £1 postage & packing. Requests for digital copies of Society material must be submitted to the committee for its approval.

Please contact any of the keyholders listed on page 1 if you wish to make arrangements to visit the archives.

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Forthcoming programme

- Nov 24th 7.30pm start for AGM followed by:-
- 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
- Dec 8th Pictorial entertainment
The Traditional end of year selection from our growing archives

Solstice: A Very Ancient Celebration

(A contribution from our Canadian counterpart)

We will soon celebrate Christmas but few people realise that it was instituted to mark the Winter Solstice. Why?

First, lets take a quick look at this phenomenon of solar astronomy. The Earth revolves round the Sun once a year but, since its rotation axis leans at 23.5 °, pointing at the Polar Star, the daylight hours vary during the year, producing the seasonal changes that we know in the northern hemisphere.

One can follow these changes by taking note of the changing day-night duration and by observing on the horizon the position of the sun at sunrises and sunsets over the year. At the time of the equinoxes, March and September 21st, day and night are of equal lengths. Following September 21st, sunlight hours gradually shorten to attain a minimum on December 21st, the Winter Solstice. On that day, the sun rises and sets at its southernmost on the horizon, i.e. 121° and 236° relative to the geographic north.

The word SOLSTICE comes from SOL, sun, and STICE, standing. At that time of the year, the sun rises and sets at the same location on the horizon and the daylight duration remains the same for about twelve days. After that, daylight hours begin to increase.

Why Celebrate the Winter Solstice?

The earliest winter solstice celebrations go back to primeval times when people took note with great anxiety of the decreasing daylight hours, fearing that the sun would eventually disappear altogether. However, when they realised that, at the time of the solstice, the sun was coming back, they started to celebrate the return of light.

During Prehistory, in order to keep track of the changing solar cycle, men developed stoneworks, sometimes very complex, true astronomical observatories, with Stonehenge most likely the greatest. Here in America, for example in Vermont, stone chambers

were built orientated in such a way as to pinpoint the occurrence of the winter solstice.

Celebrations differed throughout Antiquity but essentially focussed on the return of light or the passage from death to rebirth. In ancient Egypt, the god-man Osiris was entombed, then, coming out of the shrine, the priests announced that a virgin had brought forth in the light. A strange resemblance with the Christian Nativity belief.

I personally witnessed a similar ritual at the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico where I had the privilege of attending that December 24th night ceremony. Around midnight, the Indians came out of a chapel with great cries and gunshots in the air, carrying on their shoulders a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the same time, numerous bonfires were lit on the plaza. An unforgettable human and spiritual experience. I realise that I witnessed an age-old tradition that was transmitted to New Mexico. But how and when?

In Rome, the event became a feast of decorations, gifts, dances, etc. They celebrated Saturnalia.

Christianity joined the celebration when the Church wanted to earmark the birthday of Jesus although the date is still unknown. Around 300 AD, the 25th of December was chosen because it was a popular date in Rome! However, it took another 600 years before all the rest of Europe adopted Christmas Day on December 25th.

Today, in our North American society, most people unknowingly celebrate the winter solstice starting on December 25th but there are exceptions. For eight days in December, Jews celebrate Hanukkah, the Festival of Light, whereas the Christian Orthodox from Eastern Europe celebrate Christmas on January 7th, i.e. the end of the solstice period.

Winter Solstice in Potton (Canada).

Here in Potton, we have the opportunity to have a site that was erected for observing the winter solstice in ancient time. It consists of a vast man-made terrace with three aligned standing stones. One of them, less than a metre above the ground, shows two engraved straight markings, one pointing north-south, the other indicating the exact position of the winter solstice sunrise on the east horizon.

Who built the site? We don't know but it can be associated with the numerous ruins left by these illustrious stone builders who created the archaeology of our landscape.

When was the site built? We don't know either but certainly at a time when the climate was much milder than today. Indeed, to reach the site and to effectively use it, there had to be much less snow than today. As a matter of fact, last year, the excursion was cancelled because there was over a metre of snow on the ground.

Our climate is much colder today than it was in year 1000 but cooled down dramatically starting around 1350. Another stone structure down below the White site also suggests the occurrence of a much milder climate in ancient times.

The site offers the opportunity to live and see with one's own eyes this ancient human ritual of observing the winter solstice sunrise in a unique environment.

A last thought. If, at the time of the winter solstice, people of our society were better connected with the cosmos as ancient people were, a much greater interior peace would prevail than in shopping plazas.....

Gerard Leduc PhD, Program Director
Potton Heritage Association Inc.
December 9th 2004

If only bricks could talk! – Part 7

Growing up above the shop.

The Georgian bricks of my childhood home, which had watched celebrations on Potton Market Square for the great victories at Trafalgar and Waterloo, now saw the relief at the ending of another war and the overthrow of Adolf Hitler. My parents, brought together by the War years, could not have realised how much life would change in the 50's and 60's as they continued the traditions of a small Ironmonger's business.

My father, Michael Ibbett, was born into a family of Agricultural Engineers in the Huntingdonshire market town of St Neots. Only 16 when the war broke out, he did service with the local Home Guard before joining up for training with the RAF. Fate was to post him to St Andrew's where he met my mother, Muriel Main. Romance blossomed but his next posting took him to America for flight training in Miami in Oklahoma. On his return he was to train new recruits on planes including the Spitfire.

My parents married in 1948, taking over the shop at Potton in the same year. To begin with they lodged with my grandparents at St Neots and would cycle over Boulder clay ridges and Greensand lanes to Potton and the shop. The front bricks of the building looked out over a decaying Shambles building in the middle of the marketless Square and the rear bricks watched over a Blacksmith's business that was to survive into the '60's.

The Square of 1948 contained :- Theobalds, Saddler; Careless, Newsagent; Norman, Fruit & Veg; Campling, Tailor; Lloyds Bank; Bartle, Bus Prop; Nichols, Butcher; Hibbs, Tobacconist & Barber; Bennett, Rose & Crown; Towl, Baker; Howard, Draper; Ford, Chemist; Giddings, Butcher; Whitbread, Post Office; Burton, Grocer; Cox, Printer & Newsagent; Carter, 2nd Hand, Hawkins, Fish & Chip and Armond, Confectioner.

My father did not change the name of the shop as he maintained that supplies were easier to obtain for an established name. It cannot have been easy for my mother, with her Scottish Accent, to comprehend the local dialect but she was soon part of the local Women's Institute, contributing her piano playing skill to meetings.

The bricks of the Ironmonger's watched silently as the old Shambles Market buildings, once the pride of the town, were dismantled in the early 50's and replaced by a new Clock House and Library to reflect the needs of a new era. Behind the shop there were new voices as the building acquired a young family for the first time for nearly a century. The cellar, attics, garden and outbuildings became the playground for three young boys. A family photograph shows my father in front of the workshop where George and Henry Tysoe had constructed bicycles and in which he used his own metal and woodworking skills to repair customer's items

My mother was always up early with a breakfast on the table for the family. The shop was open from 9am to 5pm, with a break for lunch, for six days a week. Customers who turned up at 12.55 were not in my mother's good books as she always had lunch on the table promptly at 1pm!

Thursday was early closing day and was the only time the family could do any shopping outside the town. The late 50's and early 60's were a time of change as old areas of towns were renewed. My father would combine Thursday afternoon shopping expeditions with visits to firms to collect stock for the shop. At Bedford there was a supplier of Ely's cartridges for shotguns, which were needed by the local farmers in pest control. There were also bird scarer ropes with a large firework 'banger' at intervals. These were a star turn at Bonfire night! I can still remember the run down area of Bedford that was transformed into the present Bus Station area.

At Stevenage my father collected items from a Cash and Carry warehouse while the family marvelled at the New Town with its Space Age shopping centre and its water fountain Clock feature.

The population of Potton had remained at around 2000 since the Mid-Victorian era but the 1960's were to bring a rise in population helping to support a small Ironmongery business. The availability of better roads and cheap motoring enabled people to travel further to work and new housing appeared in the town. The photograph of the shop from the early 60's shows that items could be safely left on display, not only on the outside wall of the shop, but also on the road! One item is a Planet Junior Hoe, used by Market Gardeners on the local light sandy soils, which came in wooden boxes. I used to enjoy the task of unpacking and assembling these hoes.

The interior of the shop had changed little since Victorian times. The battered counter had a wall full of shelves and rectangular wooden boxes behind it. Low down were the boxes of loose nails to be weighed out on the shop scales with its imperial weights, checked occasionally by a weights and measures inspector. Higher up were boxes of screws, hinges, doorknobs and other household items. Set into the counter was a metal ruler with a pair of scissors on a chain for cutting items to length. Elsewhere countless little drawers had their own little collection of springs, bathplugs and other essential little items for ensuring that household items could be kept going for another few years. The ceiling groaned with a collection of cans that needed a special pole to retrieve. As three young boys played football in the large room above the shop these would shake and rattle in rhythm with the latest pop music fashion! Other drawers held collections of pigments for paints such as red lead.

At the back of the shop was the paraffin tap. Paraffin was used by many locals for heating greenhouses and homes, including my own room. If a paraffin heater ran out of fuel it would burn its wick filling a room with tiny particles of soot that got into closed

cupboards and between pages of books. I improved my decoration skills after one 'soot-out' in my room!

By the mid 60's my parents had become a part of the local fabric and the building seemed to have settled down to another era of stability. But the pace of change was to increase and the final article of this series will follow the shop through near structural disaster and High Street decline into the 21st century and a new era of ownership.

Peter Ibbett

The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of his colleagues in the Potton History Society. The author can be contacted at pjibbett@aol.com.

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William Wisdom's view of Potton

William Wisdom, an excise office in Dorsetshire, (1756 -1830) left a gossiping diary in which he mentions a visit paid to Potton in 1821. He says 'Potton is a well built little town with a Market House in the middle, made little use of. Corn is pitched in the street, wet or dry, on a little straw in 5 bushel sacks, which they call so many loads. This absurd custom seems to be continued because 'it has always been so'.

The Sheep Fair on October 22nd was a 'dull sale ... the worst fair ever seen. About a thousand sheep, white faced with dull black spots in them, wool long and matty.'

Mrs Webb of Biggleswade, formerly of Sussex called at the Windsor Arms to sell 'still waters' and said that she would rather be hanged in Sussex than die a natural death in Bedfordshire.'



Flag Fen Trip

The Iris seeds float and are dispersed by water, its rhizome is adapted to survive in airless, waterlogged soils.

Sharp at 9.30 we departed on cue,
Passing Bushmead Priory, a distant view.
Then Holmewood Hall for a quick fleeting look,
And Yaxley, the cuckoo land, so soon forsook.
Skirting round Peterborough we wended our way,
To Flag Fen's round houses, of yesterday.
Found in 1982 – upright Oak poles, all in a row,
They grew in an era 3000 years ago.
Their age was determined by 'dendrochronology'
(For that you'll receive a sincere apology).
Now time had flown and we had to rush,
To Sacrewell Farm Centre, our venue for nosh.
'Twas 'Ye Olde Hen House', set for a ploughman's,
And eagerly self ladled by many clasping hands
We tucked in, with a cockerel showing,
Yes! It was George, to his flock he was crowing.
After – some looked o'er the farm, others the mill,

And then we swapped round, till all had their fill.
O'er hill and dale, part of Northampton for sure,
We're off on the rest of our glorious tour.
Through Wansford and a lush country scene,
As though through the Cotswolds we'd just been.
We drove down an oak lined lane for a look –
Part of John Clare's four day trek, he once took –
At Fotheringhay's narrow brook, we held in our sides,
As over the bridge our coach gingerly glides.
Then on to Kings Cliffe – and Oundle too,
There for a short stop, a trip to the loo.
Off once again we were floating on air,
Looking at parachutes descending, did stare.
So ended our tour, back in Old Potton Town,
Saying 'Goodbye to all' we carefully stepped down.

K.G.L. 2005

So it's thanks to Peter and George for a memorable day out.
The rhyme, well I'm sure John Clare could have done a better
job to match George and Peter's detailed itinerary for a great
day out.

Trip to Flag Fen and Sacrewell Farm - The Inside Story

Two very interesting places to visit, nice weather, our friendly Saffords driver Colin, and on Sunday 26th June 2005 off we went along a route through pretty countryside and lovely villages, especially those in north east Northamptonshire. The trip as usual was devised and narrated by Peter and I.

It may be of interest to you to learn a little of how Peter and I decide and plan these coach trips. Basically, we pool our knowledge of places we have visited, seen advertised or have other information on. We choose a place or places we believe you, our members, would like to visit, put the idea to our committee the year before and if agreed we do a reconnaissance (a recky) by car in late winter or early spring of the year of the trip. This trip took two reckies, to enable us to decide a route through those lovely Northamptonshire lanes and villages. Before a recky we use maps and other literature to get a rough idea of a route to and from the main places to visit. On the recky we drive at a speed we perceive a coach would travel and time various points to make a realistic plan for the day. A few other things to bear in mind during a recky are road suitability for a coach, good views of churches, houses, etc. and if behind trees that we can see in the winter, bear in mind that foliage may hide them in the summer. The coach being higher than a car can cause the opposite problem, in that we might not see something worthy of mention on a recky but it will be seen from the coach on the day. This causes some quick thinking and ad-libbing but we try and foresee this as well.

With the knowledge gained from the recky of the places to be seen, its time to look up the information required via maps, books and the Internet. Once this information is put together, both from the recky and from various literature, its time to make our script. This obviously saves us both talking about the same thing twice and places some order of our narration during the big day.

On this trip in June we used the A1, turning off through the Alconbury's, onto what used to be the old A1, now used for local and non-motorway traffic. This took us down the fen edge right into the fens at the village of Holme. The soil here is what I call proper fen soil, it is black, with a pile of "bog oak" that has been ploughed up here and there. The Holme posts were not far away but unfortunately down a road not suitable for a coach. These were placed in the ground many years ago and now prove the fens have subsided over the years, as they stand some thirteen-foot or so above today's ground level. On across the fen to Yaxley a fen edge very long village. Between here and Farcett the road crosses on a high ridge giving splendid views across the fens back to Holme and across to Whittlesey with the only brick yards still operational in an area where there used to be many all around. On Fletton Parkway we enjoyed good views of Peterborough Cathedral, before turning off through the industrial side of Peterborough and back out into the fens to Flag Fen.

Here we enjoyed refreshments before going back to ancient times. Rare breeds of pigs, and other animals were to be seen, along with reproductions of the roundhouses of the Bronze Age. Very interesting was an excavated section, still on its original site, of a walk way made of wood used to cross the marsh land and preserved in a building with wonderful paintings on the walls showing how it would have looked in all directions across marshes, Whittlesey Mere and the fens.

Next, a short trip across Peterborough to pass close to the cathedral. It was not in the plan for a large hole in the town, River Bridge being under repair and a diversion, but on the day there was. Fortunately Colin knew a way round to get us back on our proposed route only just down the road and we were soon back on route. We passed the site of the sugar beet factory, guess what it is now, yes, houses. Over Orton Mere railway station, the river Nene and lock, a very attractive area, and along the A47 to Sacrewell Farm.

On arrival at Sacrewell farm it was time for lunch and it was good and plentiful. After lunch we split into two groups, one to go down to the mill and be shown around, while the other group looked around the farm. After that there was time for afternoon tea, or whatever one might fancy from the café, before it was time to depart, about 4pm

The next stage took some detailed planning and was the reason for a second recky. With so many beautiful villages to be seen, Wansford Bridge with weight and width restrictions, Fotheringay church looking its best if approached from the south, most villages along back roads and cars parked on narrow streets, a route for a coach had to be searched for, giving us a good overall way round and views of the villages, and countryside.

Thus we set off turning south on the A1 but not coming home yet, we were able to use the flyover at Stibbington, to head north on the A1 and turn off into Wansford, seeing the pretty village, but missing the bridge which was preventing us getting the way we wanted. We climbed up over the Nene valley railway tunnel with grand views over the Nene valley and on past Sibsons where aeroplanes were taking parachutists up to jump back down to the airfield.

The route was circuitous to get us to Fotheringay to view the church from the south, passing over the long narrow bridge and the mound of the castle on our right. On through villages in another circuitous route, where several do not sound like they are spelt. Woodnewton, where Cocoa the clown ended his years, Apethorpe and the large village of Kingscliffe. Along to the lovely setting in parkland at Batherwycke. The attractive lake here used to supply water to Corby steel works. Up through Bulwick along a long country road, where apart from an odd farm, it was countryside all the way to Southwick and down to Oundle, a very historic town.

Out of Oundle through Barnwell Country Park, by the river Nene the valley of which we had followed from Peterborough. With time marching on, an executive decision was taken to miss Kimbolton which had already been seen on previous trips and come home via the A14 and A1 duly arriving not to far off of time.

Peter and I enjoy doing this and there are several things that make it well worth the effort. We enjoy the challenge and the reckies. It is very rewarding if it all works on the day and if you all enjoy what we have arranged for you, that's the real purpose of the exercise. It certainly all came together on this occasion and according to feed back on the day we believe you all had a good time. There is another thing that we can't control but can and do ask in prayer for, yes, good weather, and it was wonderful. Thank you all for your continued support.

Although not a full description I hope this article has helped you reminisce the day, and that you have found an interest in what goes on to organise a trip like this. If you were unable to be there on the day, I hope this article gives you a good idea of how the day proceeded. Those of you who have not yet joined one of our excursions may, perhaps, be tempted to come along next time.

George Howe.

Having enjoyed several overseas coach tours I have to say that none have reached the standard provided by Potton History Society. Sadly some of us (well, me anyway) were so exhausted after the busy day that we fell asleep and missed Fotheringay altogether, so if we ever go in that direction again can we have another look please, or how about a complete 'Judith' day. Ed.

My War Time Memories

At the beginning of the War in September 1939 nothing much was happening except the arrival of the first evacuees, who came from Hornsey in London. Also at that time, work began on dismantling iron railings from houses and buildings in Potton. This was to be used for the war effort. The blackout was imposed with no light showing from buildings – plus no streetlights. This also applied to the few cars about at that time which could only use a slit of light through special headlamps. Despite those dark days of '39 there was very little trouble when people walked about the streets in the blackout. We were never frightened of getting mugged. Can you imagine walking about in the same situation today?

After a few months of the War a lot of the evacuees went back to London as there was not much happening at this time, with only a few remaining. When the bombing began in earnest in 1940 a fresh wave of evacuee children came to Potton, mainly from the East End of London and they stayed until the end of the War.

In Potton there were Army Units at the Manor and in the grounds of what is now the John O'Gaunt Golf Club. There were also RAF personnel at Tempsford; we also found out at the end of the War that they were dropping spies from Tempsford into Europe. There were also Canadian Air Force flying out from Great Gransden.

Although there were not many bombs dropped in Potton, four or five came down at Deepdale, damaging two cottages alongside the road opposite Fen Farm. At the time local people thought they were aiming for the Potton railway line. Nobody was injured and the houses remained empty until after the war, when they were demolished.

As the War went on, food was getting more in short supply and food rationing was introduced. Only home grown fruit was available bananas and oranges were not seen again until the end of the War, as these would have had to be shipped in from overseas. Beer was also in short supply and a selection of Pubs in Potton would have a

delivery on a certain day. When people knew the day of the delivery they would all pour in on that particular night and they would drink the pub dry after a night or so! Then they would have to wait for the next delivery again.

As eggs were in short supply many people kept their own chickens but when they were no longer laying they could be killed and used for eating for the meat. For most of the War, from 1940 onwards I lived with my parents on a smallholding where we kept pigs, besides chickens. We were allowed by the Government to have one pig killed for our own consumption every six months and it would be killed by the local butcher on his own premises.

There were a fair few Land Army girls living in Potton, in fact we had one staying with us for a part of the War. Some stayed in Hostels, one of which was a big house called 'The Hollies' opposite to the Co-op store during that period. They would do any jobs on the farms, working on the land, driving horses etc.

I remember in 1943 the Army began putting up Nissen huts along the grass verges (if wide enough) to be used for storing ammunition. I remember a lot of them along the Potton to Gamlingay Road. The ammunition would be used for the landings in France onwards.

In 1944 German prisoners of War stayed in the Manor grounds and were sent out to work on the farms and I often saw them walking home after a day's work. There was no trouble from them, in fact three or four of them stayed after the War and went on and married Potton girls. As for transport, as the railway was running then, there was a good service from Bedford to Cambridge with only three stations between Potton; Gamlingay, Old North Road and North Bridge. When we arrived at Cambridge there was always a bus there waiting to take us into the City centre. Also there was a good service to Bedford. It was a sad day when the railway closed.

In the 1940's the weather was much colder in the winters with lots of frosts and snowfalls.

Bob Darlow July 2005.

Two Ghost Stories

Both these stories are true and even allowing for the fact that as the years pass ones memory fades a little, the facts of these stories are true.

During WW2 my Mother, Sister and I who lived at 19 Bury Hill, Potton, got to know several military people very well, mostly air-crew, but also some soldiers. One of these soldiers was a member of a tank crew, his name was Morris. Unfortunately his tank was hit and set alight and Morris was killed, we believe burnt to death, a horrible way to die. On the evening of this sad event we were all in bed, fast asleep. Suddenly, we heard my sister scream. My Mother and I rushed into her bedroom. "I've just seen Morris standing at the bottom of the bed smoking a cigarette" she said. "Don't be silly" we said but my Sister pointed to the ceiling and there for all of us to see, was cigarette smoke curling up to the ceiling! The next day we heard that Morris had been killed and we, my Sister, in particular, were convinced his 'spirit' had visited us.

On another night we were all upstairs getting ready for bed. We heard the front gate open and close and footsteps coming round the house to the back door. Our dog, who slept in the shed at night, started to bark. My Mother opened a bedroom window and looked out, but could see no one, even allowing that we had blackout and no lights were visible. "Who's there?" she asked, but received no answer. Next, we heard a knocking on the back door and by this time our dog wasn't barking it was howling. My Mother ran downstairs and opened the back door but there was no one there. She went to the shed and found our dog having a fit and brought it into the house. As we were trying to calm it down we heard the footsteps go back round the house and the gate open and close again. We saw no one. The next day we learned that a pilot we knew very well had his plane shot down at exactly the same time as we heard those footsteps and we had, again, been visited by his 'spirit'.

We, as a family, could have imagined the footsteps and the knock on the door, but our dog knew there was something unnatural there, hence the fit!

Cyril Goldsmith

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Dangerous Times

Extract from 'Hertfordshire Express', 8th September 1894, price 1d

On Thursday week Thomas Charter, employed by Potton Brewery Co. was fixing one of the trays used to catch the oil under the bearings of the shaft in the hop room and his woollen jersey was caught by one of the bolts on the shaft and he was drawn up against the ceiling and before he could be extricated, he was severely injured by being doubled up, there not being room for his body to revolve with the shaft. Mr Walker the Surgeon was quickly in attendance and under his care, Mr Charter is now slowly getting well.

On Monday afternoon as children were playing with a truck on Biggleswade Road a little girl named Armond managed to get her leg between the spokes of the wheel and broke her leg.

On Tuesday, as threshing was being carried out at Vicarage Farm, by a purchaser at the recent sale of cropping a young man named Alfred Theobald met with a severe accident, the elevator falling on him. The teeth ran into his leg causing deep wounds which bled violently. He was taken at once by train to Bedford Infirmary and is in a very dangerous state.

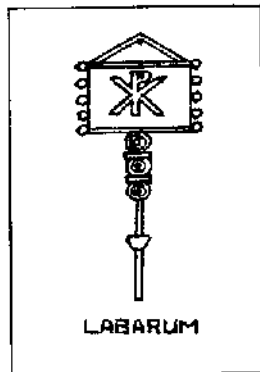
The Sod. Trodden by Ancient Feet

The Coin.

The winter rains had washed any shards turned over by the autumn and winter digging on my plot. The count up to November 2002 totalled one hundred and twenty seven shards, so I must have improved my way of seeing the range of samples that time has scattered over my allotment.

The gooseberry seedling, now with the blackcurrants, was looking well and healthy. Beneath the plant a small, flat, dark brown object on the rain washed soil caught my eye, it was roughly disc shaped and only five eighths of an inch diameter. I picked it up and it felt metallic, a wipe over its surface revealed coin like details. A spit and polish showed it to be old, which indeed it was. In fact it turned out to be nearly one thousand, seven hundred years old and Roman, this was confirmed by Holly Duncan of (now Albion) Archaeology, St. Mary's Bedford. Treating it as a very special find I framed it for our first grandchild. I enclosed it in a flip flop mount to emphasise the method of stamping (see opposite page). The text was compiled by me and the calligraphy style is of my own design.

Detail from reverse of coin see page 24



Standard said to have been devised by Constantine the Great in 312 after a vision consisting of a spear. Converted by a transverse bar into a cross and surmounted by a wreath enclosing Christian monogram CHI - rho; any of several variants of this.

Licinius and Constantine I 311 - 324

Constantine I alone 324 - 337

ROMAN COIN

Found on Plot 13 (under a gooseberry bush) on
Stratton Allotments, Biggleswade, Beds

by Keith Geoffrey Lawrence on 11-01-02.

The Gooseberry bush was a seedling growing in with
raspberry cages. I moved the young bush to another
position, I found the coin on the surface under the
bush after its first year in its new position, it bears
yellowish green berries. I've named it Constantine
II, It's now been transplanted at 29 Glebe Road.



For identification I took the coin to Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church, Bedford. Where the Artefact
Specialist, Holly Duncan, gave this description:
Constantine I. Obverse: Laur, head facing right.
Letters of Legend visible consist of... ANT... possibly
either CONSTANTINVS PF AVG or IMP. CONSTANTINVS
PF AVG. Denomination: AE 4.

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NOTICE BOARD

The Roman occupation of Britain lasted approx 400 years with the Boudiccan uprising in the first 100 years, so this coin arrived in our area towards the end of the Roman period.

Reverse: ?GLORIA EXERCITVS? Two soldiers standing either side of a standard INEX ·TRP· (Trier mint)

Constantine I 307-337



Trier is a town on the River Mosel in the Rhineland Palatinate area of Germany and is situated close to the border of Luxembourg. Julius Classicianus a provincial of Celtic descent and one of the most humane procurators in Britain AD 61. He served commanding a cavalry regiment, he married Julia Pacata daughter of a Celtic Noble in the Trier Region and he ensured that he mitigated the harsh treatment after the Boudiccan rebellion by Governor Suetonius Paulinus.

To Matilda Rose from Granddad Lawrence. 2002

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Use of Archive Materials

Our archives are available for all. For further details on how to gain access please see page 4.

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Water Pumps

On a large scale map of Potton, dated 1882, more than sixty water pumps are marked, in amongst the houses. This has aroused the curiosity of one of our members, who is hoping to find out a little more about them. If anyone has any memories of a pump tucked away in the back yard or, even better, if one still exists somewhere, we would be delighted to hear from you.

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AGM - November 24th 2005

Another year has flown by and once again it is time to review the progress of the Society. This is also your chance to ensure that we are able to continue with our work by joining the committee for the forthcoming year. There are two vacancies waiting to be filled so don't miss out on this opportunity. If you are interested, have a word with any of the existing committee members listed on page 1.

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Newsletter no. 40

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome, no matter how short or long. Please pass items to Vera Parry, Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue is 1st February 2006.