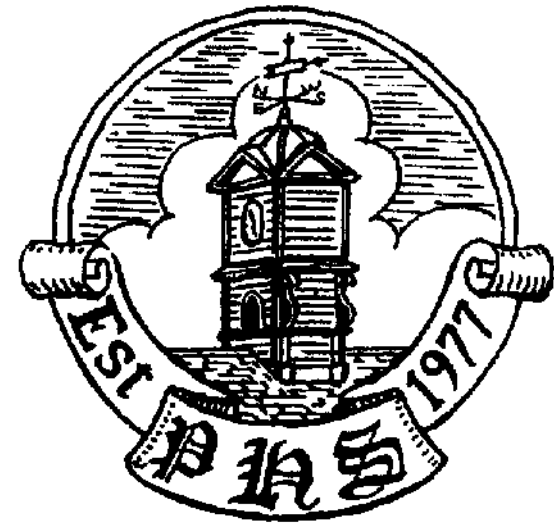


# Potton History Society



Newsletter Number 40 Spring 2006

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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 presented some of his research on the life of the late Georgian labourer and his family. Work came to children early to help with the family budget. Boys would be hired as servants at the yearly Hiring or Statute Fair and would often 'live in' with the family. Upon marriage they would become day labourers and thus become subject to the ebb and flow of the farming economy. This era saw an increase in girls employed as domestic servants. Photographs from the Society Archives illustrated labourers at work in the Victorian and Edwardian fields of Potton.

At the AGM in **November** chairman George Howe reported on another good year for the Society. The growing Society archive of photographs and documents is undergoing a period of reorganisation into new files with the hope that the collection can be eventually converted into a digital format to allow greater public use. Any Pottonian with an interest in this area would be welcome to help the present committee. After the AGM Peter Ibbett entertained us with his discovery of a bound volume of 'The Motor' from 1910 which gave an insight into the speed at which the motor car became part of everyday life. The Society would be particularly interested in any information about motoring in the area in the first three decades of the last Century.

In **December** George Howe and Peter Ibbett provided an evening of pictorial entertainment. The audience was treated to a film session featuring past and present events in the town, from videos that are now part of the Archive of the Society. The session included footage of the 'Potton Car' on display under its own power. Photographs from the Society's digital collection included stills from the opening of the Fire Station in 1956, which enabled identification of Pottonians of the day and photographs of changes in King Street. The Society welcomes digital copies of past and present Potton to add to its collection.

Bob Burn-Murdoch, the curator of the Norris Museum in St Ives, spoke at our **January** meeting on the highly appropriate topic of Fenland Skating. Victorian photographs of St Ives in 1891 showed a frozen River Ouse with a horse and cart suggesting regular hard winters. In fact there were as many mild winters as cold with Fenland skaters having to wait for their opportunities. The middle and late Victorian times saw Fenland Skaters such as 'Turkey' Smart dominate skating with their adaptation of Dutch skates and techniques. However the rise in popularity of skating in Norway with its regular long skating season saw the eclipse of the Fenland tradition with its occasional hard winters. The Society mounted a small display of photographs showing past cold winters in the area.

Our speaker for **February** was Bridget Flanagan, author of a book about the New Bridges of St Ives. They were built in 1822 at a cost of over £4000 by the Bury to Stratton Turnpike Trust, in order to provide improved access across the flood plain to the ancient medieval bridge over the River Ouse. At that time they were the longest road causeway with the greatest number of continuous brick arches. The responsibility for the original causeway had been the cause of a long local dispute between St Ives and the Duke of Manchester. The bridges continue to have an impact on local politics as they are in urgent need of up to £4,000,000 of repairs due to many years of neglect.

Gordon Townsend, a former member of the Fire Service, brought along to our **March** meeting a selection from his vast collection of models, photos and memorabilia relating to the history of fire fighting. The use of water syphons is recorded throughout the ages as far back as the Egyptians of 2000 BC. In the Roman period the Chief Fire Officer was even called the Syphonarius. In the C17<sup>th</sup> Fire Insurance companies were set up to provide the service for those who could afford to pay but it was another 200 years before local parishes were obliged to have their own equipment, a scheme initially administered by the churchwardens.

## Archive Update

Our archive rooms are becoming more and more user friendly as time goes by. Peter, Christine, and I have made several visits to the rooms sorting, cataloguing, and indexing our various, and interesting paper archives. In doing this we have been putting systems in place to enable anyone to find what they require with ease. I can report that these systems do actually work, as I have been for various items now and found them relatively easy to locate, which is marvellous, and proves the system works. There is still much work to do on more in depth indexing.

Bill Lavender has scanned about 3,000 slides, which form our total slide collection, into our computer system and onto disc. Not only does this make a back up system but also they can now be viewed along with all our photographs on the computer, or shown via the necessary projection equipment.

Our system for any new or donated Photo's into our collection is for Jean and Ken to edit, place, and caption them onto our usual black card. When a sufficient number have accumulated, Bill will scan them into our computer system, and on to disc. The photos will then be placed into their respective numbered books in their new page number order.

Finally our scrapbooks that Patricia Yates, and Anita Lewis put so much time into producing each year are in need of better protection. We believe the plastic folders we use for our archive paper work will be ideal for these. This is one of many ongoing projects in our research rooms, so if you have only a little spare time we would appreciate your help.

I wish to thank those mentioned above for all their help and hard work this last few months.

George Howe.

## Little Eva

After a very successful year in 2005 showing "Little Eva" off at the various events and her first maiden run, we are ready to show her off again this year. We have already been invited to take her to Bolnhurst, and I am sure there will be others.

The Potton car book needs reprinting as we have sold all old stock. When we reprint we usually update the latest happenings to the car, and her latest condition, and work on her. Hopefully this will be done in time to sell our books at this year's shows.

## Potton Baptists

### **The Lord's faithfulness to a faithful people**

Our member, Pastor Stan Evers has at last fulfilled his ambition in writing the history of 200 years of the Baptist church in Potton. He at first intended it to be finished, and ready for sale in year 2000 when the Baptist Church in Potton celebrated their 200 years. More and more information kept making its way to Pastor Evers thus preventing him from meeting his target. Towards the end of 2005 saw Pastor Evers ambition fulfilled, after much hard work on his behalf, and much help from people around him. Well done.

It's a very nice book and very good value for only £2.50p (+ pp.) It is of good quality, and full of local history about the Baptist church, and its people. It has 80 pages full of information, along with a few photographs appearing through the book and is available from Stan Evers, 9 Oak Crescent Potton, Bed's SG19 2PX. Tel. 01767 261792 e-mail; stanley@evers9.freemove.co.uk (Cheques made payable to Potton Baptist Church).

We in Potton History Society wish Stan every success with this book.

George Howe

## Forthcoming Programme

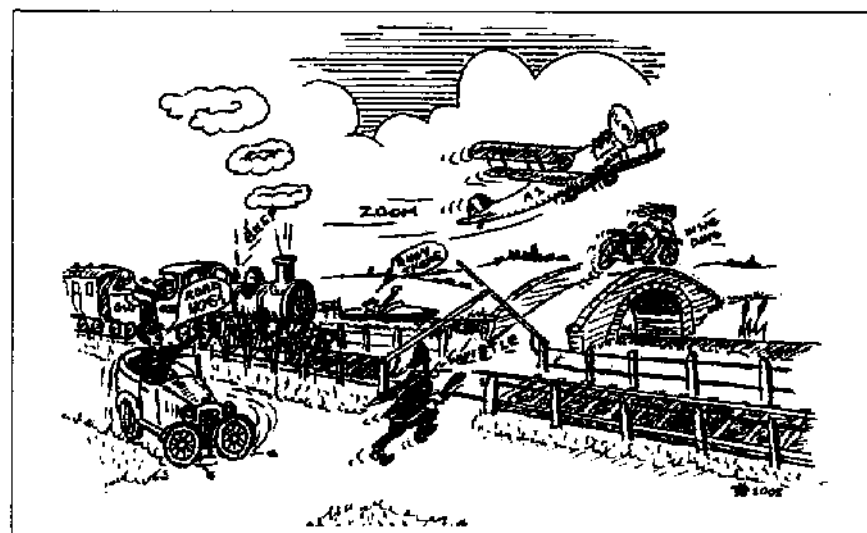
- May 25<sup>th</sup>**    **The History of Royston**                      **John Smith**  
The story of an 1100's new town through which trade from Potton Market passed on its way to London
- Jun 22<sup>nd</sup>**    **Royston Visit**                                      7.30pm start at Royston  
Join us on a guided tour of Royston with its Cave and museum. Lifts will be available in members cars. Watch for details
- July 27<sup>th</sup>**    **50 Years of Potton Clock House**                      **Peter Ibbett**  
On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1956 Potton entered a new era with the opening of the Clock House. What events lead up to its building
- Aug 24<sup>th</sup>**    **Archive Evening – Potton's Gas, Water and Sewage**  
Come and find out how Potton was supplied with its gas and water and the problem of providing sewerage in the Victorian era
- Sept 28<sup>th</sup>**    **The Turnpike Era**                                      **Michael Knight**  
A return visit from a member of the Milestone Society to provide us with a view of life along Turnpike Roads of England
- Oct 26<sup>th</sup>**    **Unearthing your family History**                      **George Howe**  
Our Chairman has been researching the history of his family. His talk will illustrate how to go about finding out about your family, including the pitfalls to avoid!
- Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>**    **Call My Bluff – Bedfordshire History**                      **Ann Hagen**  
The Keeper of Social History will challenge you to identify mystery objects by examining and then selecting the correct definition  
    >>>Note 7.30pm start for AGM<<<
- Dec 7<sup>th</sup>**    **Pictorial Entertainment**  
The Traditional end of year selection from our growing archives illustrating past and present changes in our area

## On The Road In 1910

Peter's 'On the Road in 1910' gave us all a detailed insight into the auto innovations of the age of mechanical wizardry – a great leap forward from the horse and carriage. This was closely followed by George giving us a 'Keystone Cops' style of the ,then, reality on the big screen, showing the crazy inventions and congestion in London at that time, that continues even to this day. Thanks to both for their informative and entertaining programmes.

This is my light-hearted view of how the speed race would have looked if 'Daisy' had taken part: -

'Daisy's Race Rage 1910'



♪ Daisy, Daisy, the Coppers are after you, ♪  
If they catch you, they'll give you a month or two.  
They'll tie you up with wire behind the Black Maria,  
So ring your bell and pedal like hell-  
On your bicycle made for two!

Us youngsters would sing this and other like songs with gusto on the coach home from a day trip to the seaside, way back in the late 30's

Keith Lawrence

**If only bricks could talk!**  
**The Life and Times of a Potton shop.**

Final part of the history of 18 Market Square, Potton

**On into the future.**

Since they were first laid, the Georgian bricks of my childhood home have watched over the celebrations for the crowning of eight Kings and Queens on Potton Market Square. They have also seen the coming and going of five Ironmonger families since 1851. Now the arrow of history moves on and the bricks watch the coming of a new occupant to take them on into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

My parents could not have foreseen the changes that would happen in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They took over a local Ironmongery business in the late 40's and, through hard work and careful management, enabled the shop to thrive in the expansion of Potton in the 60's and 70's when the local population doubled to just over 4000 in 1981. As other Ironmongers shops faded away Tysoe's became well known for both its personal attention and its stock. 'If Mick Ibbett hasn't got it at Potton then no one has!' Indeed my father would occasionally smile to see a museum display with an item that could still be obtained in his shop! My mother cheered up some of the dustier areas of the establishment with a range of ornaments and household items not usually seen amongst tins of paint, hoes and spades.

The travelling salesman was a regular visitor to the shop at this time, touting for business for his firm. My father would spend more time in swapping stories than in discussing the acquisition of new stock! Indeed people so enjoyed talking to my father and listening to his wide range of stories that I suspect the buying of an item from the shop was only a secondary consideration in walking in through the front door!

Times were difficult for small shopkeepers in the 80's and 90's, as large DIY stores opened and increased car ownership enabled families to shop with ease miles away from home, seven days a week. Yet my father continued to run a profitable business and met the needs of locals by providing for individual needs in contrast to the items for the 'normal' person in the big DIY 'sheds'. My mother's increasing selection of ornaments and colourful sandwich boxes drew in mothers and their children.

The little workshop at the bottom of the yard, where bicycles had been assembled in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was used by my father for dealing with small repairs for customers. One customer wanted a pair of shears sharpening and my father did the job so well that a regular stream of local folk appeared all wanting the same high standard! My father had metal and woodworking skills acquired from his training in the family firm of Agricultural Engineers and used the lathe and small blacksmith's furnace in the workshop to make items such as the Potton Hoe. This is a museum item at Stockwood Museum in Luton, and was reborn in a very limited edition and much prized by the few who obtained it.

As retirement approached my father saw to it that his knowledge was passed on via his shop manager, Nigel Witten, who was able to lease the shop and carry on the business in the 1990's.

My father continued to support local commerce by helping with the Local Traders Association and supporting various campaigns to help Potton maintain an active local community. He also applied his talents to seeing that the building was maintained in good order. The windows above the shop front are a good example of Georgian Sash windows. These operate by lead weights counterbalancing the sliding windows. These now are in perfect order due to my father's careful restoration. He had a keen sense of observation and spotted that some of the glass windowpanes were thicker at the bottom than the top. Glass is a supercooled liquid which gradually flows under

the force of gravity. This suggested that some of the glass could date from the building of the house in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Retirement often brings out latent talents. His family was intrigued by the gradual appearance of pencil and pen sketches, which began to win prizes in the annual local show. My father did not feel that his work was more than a gentle leisure activity but it reflects a desire to apply and develop basic skills and to take a pleasure in creating a lasting article. His sketch of the Blacksmith's, which stood behind the shop on Hogg Hill, draws upon an old photograph but is also the product of several hours of drawing the individual items in his sketch book before bringing them together in the final drawing. My mother helped maintain the cheerful garden behind the shop. Where once a horse was stabled and piles of ancient ironmongery stood, colourful flowers and roses brightened the view from the back of the shop.

The bricks of the market square building have watched over the coming and going of a range of owners serving the changing needs of their eras. A read through the pages of this newsletter demonstrates that time does not stand still and each generation must meet the challenges of scientific and technological changes. But many articles show that human values can stay constant through the ages. The exchange of gossip at the shop counter is one vital ingredient in binding together a local community. The shop will change and adapt to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century under new ownership but the bricks will continue to hear the chatter and gossip of locals who value their local shops.

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](mailto:pjibbett@aol.com).

*I had the pleasure of spending many an evening in the company of Mick Ibbett when we were both members of Potton Art Club. How I wish that I could have recorded some of the tales he had to tell of his life and times in Potton and St Neots. Ed.*

We have a mole in the **Cambridgeshire Record Office** who spotted three items: -

Easter 1822. William Ibbett of Gamblingay (*no spell checkers in those days*) fined £10 + expenses for entering field of George Bird of Woodbury where he cut branches from a Walnut Tree.  
*£10 seems a harsh fine for a labourer in those days ... but it might have been transportation to Australia.*

Epiphany 1789. James Ibbott, Mole-Catcher of Gamlingay ... fined £5 for having a hare in his possession, not being duly qualified.

Cambridge Chronicle & Huntingdon Gazette-Friday Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 1841

### **Eligible Freehold Property**

*Potton, Bedfordshire*

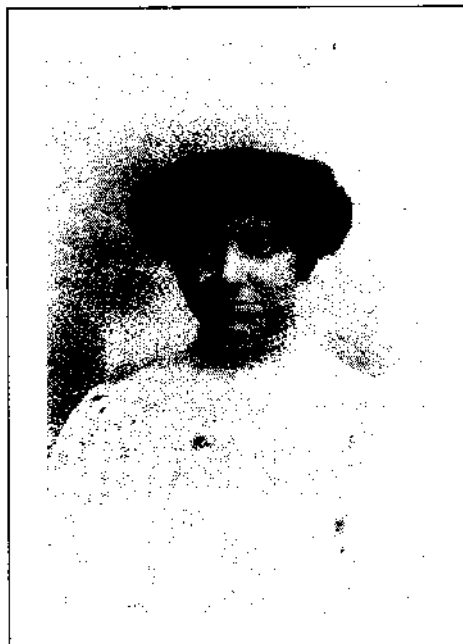
J. Carrington will Sell by Auction  
at the Swan Inn, Potton, at Six o'clock on Saturday  
evening January 1<sup>st</sup> 1842 in One Lot:-  
all that Brick-built and Tiled FREEHOLD DWEL-  
LING HOUSE, situated in Horselow-street, Potton with  
large Yard and numerous Outbuildings, with brick-built  
COTTAGE adjoining on the north side and Cottage on the  
south side, Brewhouse, Stabling, Barns and pump of good  
water. Also the valuable and extensive GARDEN-  
GROUND adjoining, in the occupation of Messrs Wm  
Savage, Odle and Northfield at £24 per annum.  
Further particulars may be known of Messrs Smith and  
Angles, Solicitors, Potton and Biggleswade, and of the  
Auctioneer.

*Horselow street is mentioned as Ostler Street in some mid- 19<sup>th</sup> Century sources so it is interesting to see it in print in 1842.*

Peter Ibbett with thanks to Cambridgeshire Record Office Assistant  
Archivist Laura Ibbett.

## Elizabeth Wagstaff 'bred of an old yeoman stock'

Malcolm Cousins of Mansfield has been researching the history of his family. An Aunt, Elizabeth Wagstaff Cousins, was born in Potton in 1885. Members of her family had been entertained by her stories of life in Potton, especially with her connection with Manor Park, home of James Poole Wagstaff, who she called 'Uncle Jimmy'. Some of Aunt Bessie's observations, however, were thought to be her own interpretation of events. To aid Malcolm's work, a copy of 'The Memoirs of the Wagstaff Estate', written by her in the early 1960's, was passed to him by her son, Arthur.



Elizabeth Wagstaff  
c.1899

Deciding to find what Potton had to offer, Malcolm discovered Trevor Ball's publication, 'Potton Manor - an Enigma'. He then realised that many of his Aunt's stories were based on fact. James Poole Wagstaff, of whom she was very fond, had married a Mrs. Jalland, in spite of her husband being alive at the time, and known to him. The dispute over Janes' will had resulted in a Court Case, brought against her by members of the Wagstaff family. The Court agreed that as Mrs. Jalland was known as James Poole Wagstaff's wife, she was entitled to his wealth and property. The result of the case was reported nationally! A substantial financial loss was suffered by the Plaintiffs.

Unlike Aunt Bess's view of her, Mrs. Jalland was very popular in Potton, and her generosity was much appreciated. On her successful return from Court, local men met her at the station, released the horses from her carriage and pulled the vehicle through the Town to Manor Park, her legal home.

According to Elizabeth's Memoirs she was born in the Manor, home of 'Father's rich relation'. She was given her name by James, her Godfather. It was the name of his Mother, to whom a window in St. Mary's Church, Potton, is dedicated. She was very proud of this fact.

Her first observations are of her Father's funeral. Aged five, she watched from a window in Fox and Crown cottages. She wrote that her Mother looked 'stately' in her 'widow's weeds'. Having been told that her Father was in Heaven with Jesus, she wondered who would look after the dogs and take them for walks.

The Manor grounds gave her much pleasure. 'I used to go into the lovely garden and sit behind a bush and watch the goldfish in the lily pond and the green leaves peeping out of the water'...'Father often went to dine with his cousin in the evening as they were very fond of each other, and used to do a lot of shooting and coursing together'.

'I must have been a queer child, different from the others. As I grew up, how I used to love the Autumn and the Spring; gathering the lovely colours of the Autumn leaves and decking out the house with them. How I loved to watch the lime buds of the Spring unfurl their lovely leaves out of the buds'...'the lovely green of the first blooms of Spring; the little snowdrops, crocus etc; just peeping out from the earth and watch them mature'. (This love of plants and flowers continued throughout her Memoirs).

The yearly Horse Fair was much enjoyed, people travelling for miles to attend. Uncle Jimmy entertained friends to a good lunch. She remembered that the copper had to be scoured out for the cooking of about 40lbs of the good old fashioned joint of old English beef. A barrel of beer, hams, legs of mutton, pickles and sauces, jellies and trifles, ices etc were all available for the guests to enjoy. It was a 'real, royal spread'.

The tone of the narration changes when she writes of the marriage between Uncle Jimmy and Mrs. Jalland. Elizabeth mentions the birth of a child which died in infancy. Apparently a 'picture shaped memorial of blue fluted glass, with an angel's head in the centre of a pair of wings behind it' was placed in the Church. She believed it had been stolen and used bitter words against the supposed miscreant. She continued to be influenced by her belief that Mrs. Jalland had stolen wealth and property from the Wagstaff family.

After caring for an aunt and her cousins, she moved away from Potton. Life became difficult for herself and her son when her husband became an invalid. He died in 1952.

Her final mention of Potton was of a visit she made to the Manor (circa 1957). Cycling from St. Neots, she went to call on the owner, Eva Pokorova. 'She came to the gate, holding a large bunch of keys'. 'With her was a sort of crossbred dog, almost like a wolf, with a lovely coat of chestnut brown. How pleased it was to see me and what a welcome it gave me'..She was told not to touch it as it was very fierce. Describing her feelings she wrote 'But I was Elizabeth Wagstaff, bred of an old yeoman stock. I took off my gloves, which were of black lace and cuddled the beautiful creature to me'. She was taken around the garden and given a bunch of flowers. (What a lovely gift to the woman who, as a child, had loved to see the snowdrops and crocus growing in the garden she was now visiting). 'When I was walking up to the house..I felt so elated, as if my pain and troubles had fallen from my shoulders, and as if I were walking

on air. I felt what a lovely welcome I had received'. 'After paying a visit to the Church, and gazing at the lovely window put up in loving memory of my Father's people....I cycled back home, enjoying every minute of the peaceful ride'.

Patricia R. Yates

### Postscript

By a strange coincidence, the Court Records of the Manor of Potton Burdets (dated from March 7th 1866 to November 24th 1932) have recently come to hand. Ownership of the copyhold land and property known as Manor Park, was presented to a Special Court on May 28th 1909. Samuel Whitbread's Steward, Mark Sharman, presided.

James Poole Wagstaff died on September 2nd 1903. His will, dated March 1st 1897, was proved in a Probate Court on January 9th 1907. After bequeathing several legacies, his real and personal estate was left 'unto Josephine Jalland (in the said will described as his wife, Dorothy Josephine Wagstaffe)'. Josephine Jalland and Charles Noble, Trustees of the will, were admitted tenants. The annual fee was 7s 4d.

At the Court held on July 1st 1909, the 'Absolute Surrender of Property' from Josephine Jalland to Frederick Gouldthorpe Smith was recorded. Josephine and Alfred Jalland were then living at 65 De Parys Avenue, Bedford.

How unfortunate that the legality of the above procedures was not explained to Elizabeth at the time. It would have saved her much unhappiness.

Patricia R. Yates  
February 2006

## **Polling Day, April 1879 – Potton**

*The following is a letter first published in the Biggleswade Chronicle in 1879 and reflects what life was like over a century ago.*

An election of Church Warden as viewed by an occasional visitor.

To the Editor, Sir,

Chance caused me to pay a visit to Potton on the morning of Friday April 18<sup>th</sup> and if an intelligent foreigner had accompanied me he would have wondered at our extraordinary mode of carrying out our local self-government. I found the so called streets of this miserable place at an early hour thronged with agricultural labourers idling about with their hands in their pockets, for the labourer put his hands in his pockets when out of work and even in the hottest weather he invariably wears a great coat when on the 'club'. The beer shops were doing a roaring business.

I asked a not very intelligent looking rustic if it was a holiday – he replied 'No, Benbow Kitchener has put up against Joe Edwards' I asked 'What for?' He did not know but Arnold put him up. The election was for the apparently coveted office of Parish Church Warden. Mr Kitchener, I found, to be a mechanic and for the moment the popular candidate. Mr Edwards, a local butcher, who, according to his hand bills, had served as Church Warden for 17 years.

Party feeling, like the beer, ran freely throughout the day. Potton has but little trade except in beer. It is said that there are no less than 35 licensed houses and the population is about 2070. An annual horse fair is held and Potton is notorious for fires, but the Insurance Companies at the last fire made such unpleasant and strict enquiries that for the last few months there has not been a recurrence of an event which is looked forward to with delight by the numerous publicans.

Having done what caused me to come to Potton I strolled up a pretty lane to the Church School where the poll was being taken and I advised the inspector of nuisances to take the same walk and keep his eyes and nose open at the street end. I found the greatest interest was taken in voting, one gentleman who I was told was a member of the School Board was rushing about with a book asking voters their names and carefully entering them. His opponent stated he was doing so in order to check a pint of beer promised to voters by one candidate, but of course squibs were much used. The greatest good humour prevailed the people seemed willing to give up a day's work for the amusement and no one would suffer except the rate payers who will have to pay the cost of the election.

Towards evening I was wending my way towards the station and I recollected the election, so I asked an old woman at the door of an inevitable public house who has been elected. After blowing her nose on the corner of her apron, she informed me with a voice broken with sorrow, that Joe Edwards had won the day – not because, as I discovered, she bore any ill will towards the winner, but because Mr Kitchener would have given his men a lot of beer if he had got in.

The day's performance would be incomplete if I were to omit the universal regret expressed at the sudden indisposition early in the day of one of Mr Kitchener's most prominent supporters. From what I heard I gleaned that he had something wrong with his heart and for some time he has been suffering from a pressure on the chest.

One of Mr Kitchener's traction engines had steamed up ready to draw the victor through the town in a beautifully decorated cart with a man with an accordion playing – 'See the Conquering Hero Come' etc. However, it was not wanted and perhaps luckily, for judging from the condition of some of the engineers I saw, it might have brought its owner into collision with a certain clause of the Locomotives Act. The winning party put up a fly but declined the services of the accordion. We ought all to be grateful that we live in a free country, have the benefit of free institutions and that even the office of Parish Church Warden is keenly contested.

An occasional visitor.

### **A Parish Poll – Exciting Contest**

*The following is an extract from the Biggleswade Chronicle giving details of the origins of the need for an election.*

The Parish of Potton has, for the first time, we believe, enjoyed the excitement and expense of a contested election for the office of Church Warden.

At the Easter Vestry, the Vicar the Reverend R Malone, had nominated Mr Henry Raynes as his Warden, while on a show of hands Mr T B Kitchener, had 24 votes as candidate for the Parish Wardenship, against 20 votes given for Mr Joseph Edwards, whose term of office had expired. A Poll was demanded for the latter and was fixed to come off on Friday 18<sup>th</sup>, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Church Schoolroom. Mr Walter Robarts and Mr W Bullfield being appointed Assessors. The town was at once divided into two hostile camps and personalities were bitterly indulged in. The origin of the contest may be briefly stated.

For some time past it has been felt by the majority of the ratepayers that it was necessary either to enlarge the Churchyard, or to provide some other burial ground, but at a meeting held in October last it was decided to defer the question for a year, the ratepayers being unwilling to incur any extra rates, in this season of financial depression, by purchasing ground for a cemetery. The feeling was in favour of enlarging the Churchyard, but the Vicar refused his consent to this step and as the retiring Church Warden is not only a tenant of some of the Vicar's land but also the Vicar's Agent and Steward, it was felt by some of the parishioners that he could not reasonably be expected to oppose the views of the Vicar. Moreover, by the scheme for the administration of the Local Charities, the Church Wardens are constituted ex-officio trustees and the parish having no voice in the election of the Clergyman's Warden it was thought desirable that the ratepayers should have a representative of their choosing on the Board. These, we are informed, were in the public grounds which led to a contest and a poll being granted both sides began to canvas.

Squids, some scowlers, and almost all devoid of wit, were freely circulated. Party spirit rose to fever heat as if the fate of a Cabinet hung upon the issue. The wealthier land owners and occupiers raged themselves under the banner of Edwards, while the small tradesmen, gardeners and labouring classes, thronged to the colours of Kitchener. At eleven on Friday, 50 voters were recorded for the latter and 37 for the former. Conveyances brought up supporters of each side and at the close of the Poll there were 181 votes by 149 persons, recorded for Edwards and 161 by as many voters for Kitchener. The former thus gaining his election by the cumulative vote.

--oo0oo--

*Did you hear about the trainee Archaeologist? He went up to the librarian and said "I wonder if you could help me, I'm looking for a book about 'Ancient Bones' by author P.Dicks".* KL

## The Sod - Trodden by Ancient Feet

### The Search Expands.

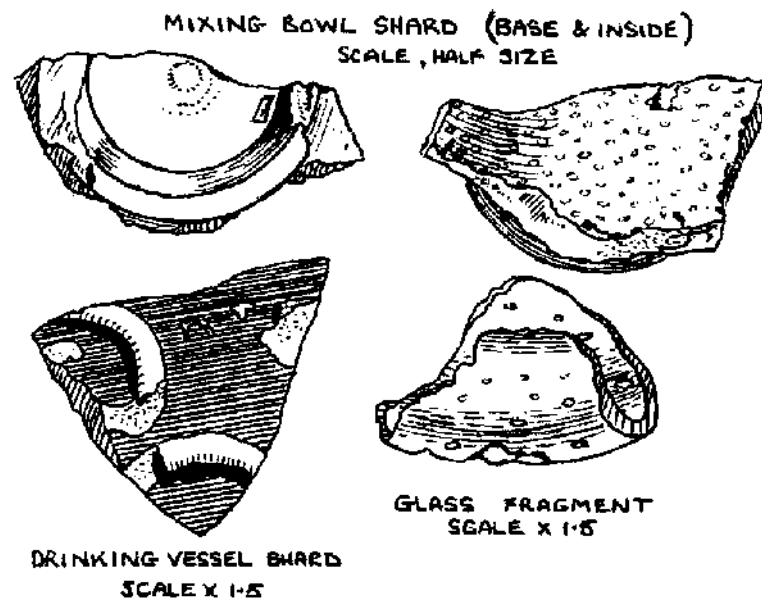
After the completion of the eastern section of the road to the 'Beazer Estate', a strip of land parallel to this road; now called 'Linear Wood', had its topsoil removed and the Albion Archaeologists were extending their Saxon Settlement excavations. Beyond this site a farmer's field reaches up to the allotment access track. This field is bisected from the Saxon excavation area by an outflow drainage ditch, where the source appears as a spring-like flow, bubbling up and through the brickwork that surrounds the storm drain. The ditch had become overgrown and the Council had this ditch drained and the spoil was spread out on the edges of the north and south fields. The ditch also separates the horse paddocks from our allotments and over two previous dry summers the flow of water hasn't stopped.

In March 2003 the dredging of the ditch gave my artefact inquisitiveness the urge to take a closer look at the ditch and see what, if anything, had been uncovered. I was not disappointed; I was soon picking up more shards of pottery that had been exposed in the banks of the ditch. Of the forty pieces recovered, more were Roman than Saxon. This indicated to me that over time, both Roman and Saxon had settled in the same area. Could they have been drawn there by the spring-like source of water that was, even now, still flowing? Old maps indicate several ponds, moats and a well in this vicinity. Also there is a site near Stratton Farm called New Spring. (Ref:- Reprint of first edition Ordnance Survey 1834, sheet sixty-two).

I widened my search into the fields each side of the ditch to cover the area where the ditch spoil had been spread. My collection, including eighteen from my allotment, now totalled ninety-nine finds. I cleaned and photographed these and took them to the Albion Archaeology Centre at Bedford for identification. There I was told it

pottery ware, one piece was part of a mortarium, or mixing bowl, with its grit inclusions on the inside face of the bowl. There was a section of the rim of a large storage jar, up to fourteen inch rim diameter and many other domestic pottery shards. Also chunks of Roman building material, ie: - roof and hypocaust tile pieces. There was part of an old fresh water mussel shell and several more recent animal bones.

Amongst the few from my allotment was a piece of thin light green glass with an air bubble inclusion, also from the same fourth century period. It could have been a glass bottle similar to one I've seen at the Roman Villa Museum at Old Welwyn. A more recent find on my site was a small piece of the stem of an old clay pipe. Throughout the early part of 2003 I made regular artefact finds on the farmer's fields, and a few on my allotment. These were all taken to the Archaeological Centre to add to their mounting collection from this area.

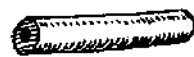


Both north and south fields had been planted with broad beans for animal fodder and these were soon covering the soil preventing further finds on the surface. Even so, my frequent treks along the banks of both sides of the ditch still turned up the odd shard that I had previously overlooked. On allotment plot number fourteen I picked up a small cross section which turned out to be part of a pottery jug handle. Quite near it lay a short stem of an old clay pipe. Although I looked, I couldn't find the bowl.

Amongst my recent two dozen pieces I found a small ceramic, or clay like, piece of lattice and wondered what it could be? My puzzle was resolved when I took it to the Albion Archaeologists who said it could be a lattice used in a pottery kiln to separate the stacking pots during firing.



SECTION THROUGH A JUG OR POT HANDLE



STEM SECTION OF A CLAY PIPE



LATTICE FRAGMENT

April still had me picking up pieces of pottery, also a few porous chunks of grey like rocks. Some of these had a glass-like layer on one face as though they had come from an old kiln. One or two had layers of heavy thick dross like rusting iron that I suspected as having originated from an iron furnace. The archaeologist's answer suggested it could have been brought in with spoil to build up the farmer's track and that the scattered pieces had been dragged out by the plough. At least it added another facet to my search for the out of the ordinary finds.

By now the farmer's crops were well established so walking the field was now out of bounds, although the headlands were still available to my eager eyes. It is possible that the archaeological survey of these fields was initiated by the quantity and the variety of my surface collections that I had taken to them since 1999, because after the farmer's crop of broad beans had been harvested excavation trenches were being dug on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003 and an archaeological survey was soon in progress. This lasted until the eleven trenches were filled in on the 16<sup>th</sup> September.

So once again I took the opportunity to seek out any shards that had been left on the surface, and I was not disappointed. Segments of pot rims, storage jars and segments of mortar bowls, all in various types of clay fabric indicated a wide range of every day items used in the Roman household. There were also segments of medieval pottery, a rusty old hand made nail and another section of a clay pipe stem, all indicative that this area had been in continuous use for a very, very long time.

The summer drought of 2003 had a surprising effect on the drainage ditch in that area, it did not dry up! At the ditch source, water was bubbling up, spring like, from below the dry storm drain in a continuous flow into the ditch. Also one of the excavation trenches exposed a small depression where water was seeping up from below. Surely that source of fresh water would attract anyone to establish a settlement in that area and take advantage of that supply. It would have provided clear water for use in the making of clay pots or tiles for local use. Indeed, segments of roof tiles and hypocaust tiles have been found strewn over this area and it would be advantageous to make these locally, as it would save on transportation.

Keith Lawrence

