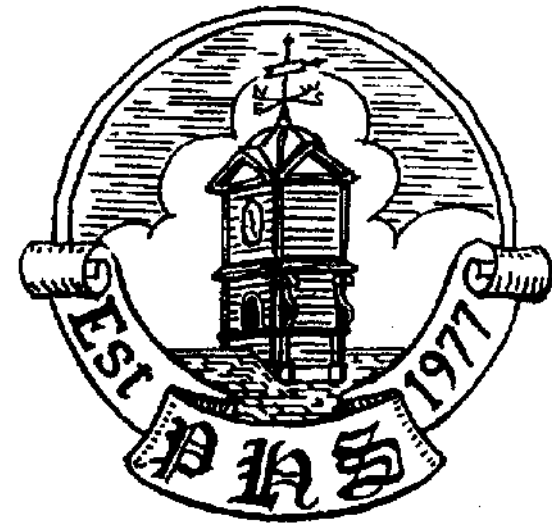


Dotton History Society



Newsletter Number 41 Autumn 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 260234

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 the story of the Enigma machine and its role in the last war. Hugh Davies, who provides guided talks at Bletchley Park, outlined the events that led up to the establishment of intelligence monitoring in the 1930s. The success of the operation depended upon the hard work of backroom personnel, including many women who listened to countless messages and passed them on without knowing the vital importance of their work. The breaking of the code using the Enigma machine was helped by some poor security by the Germans and by the development of Colossus, the first computer, to help analyse the coded messages. It was also helped by the dedication of a group of mathematicians and chess players in applying systematic logical analysis to the problem of cracking the code.

In **May** we welcomed Councillor John Smith from Royston to talk about the history of his town. The crossroad of Ermine Street with the Icknield Way was marked with Roysia's stone which is a glacial erratic from Yorkshire! This formed the base of a wayside cross set up by Lady Roisia around 1066, which gave rise to a Priory and then a town. Richard I granted a Market and James I had a hunting Lodge in the town. The unique Royston Cave has links back to the medieval Knights Templars. Market trade from Potton probably flowed to London via Royston and the old North Road. Links go back to at least 1783 when Royston was one of the main contributors to the relief fund after the great fire.

A visit to Royston took the place of our **June** meeting. Society members were welcomed by the Museum staff and enjoyed the displays showing nearly 1000 years of history, including a Victorian printing press used for many years at the Royston Crow. The group was then taken down into the unique Royston Cave, which lies under the main street. Its origins may lie in the belief of some of our ancestors that crossroads were sacred places. The Knight's Templars, a religious and military group, formed in around 1118 to

protect pilgrims to the Holy Land. The Royston Cave was probably a secret meeting place. Its unique set of wall carvings depicts religious scenes and activities important to the Templars. They were suppressed in 1312 and the Cave was forgotten until its accidental discovery in 1742 after which it has become an attraction for modern historical pilgrims.

Potton Clock House featured at the **July** meeting, having celebrated its 50th birthday that month. The nature of the original buildings on the Market Square are lost in the mists of time but a 1752 document refers to the erection of a Clock on the Market House by Lord Torrington. Developments by the Whitbread family provided the town with the unique Potton Shambles, which was in terminal decay by the 1940's. The last Lord of Potton Manor, Sir Malcolm Stewart, gave the old building to the County Council with the provision that they demolished it and rebuilt the centre portion. This opened as Potton Library, with a Parish Council room above, on 23rd July 1956. The Clock is the one that replaced the original in 1877 and was made by Bennett's of London. When the Clock Tower was renovated in 1900 the bell was replaced by a larger one made by Warner & Sons of London and illuminated dials were installed

In **August** we took a look back at the ways in which Potton developed its water, sewage, gas, electricity and telephone services. George Howe and Peter Ibbett used material from the Archives, including a Victorian map revealing that Potton had over 60 wells and pumps in the 1880's. Water supplies were increasingly contaminated from poor sanitation, resulting in the development of a sewerage system in the town in the 1870's and the sewage farm on Biggleswade Road. The Biggleswade Rural District Council developed water supplies from New Spring, near Toplers Hill just south of Biggleswade, and at Dunton, to bring piped water to the town. Potton Gas & Coke Company was supplying gas to the town

in the 1860's with its own works at Brook End until the 1930's. The supply, in the early days, could be variable leaving some parts of the town in the dark at times! The coming of electricity created its own problems with the need for many to supply the meter with coins that could run out at critical points of a radio play. The original telephone exchange in Brook End was replaced with the present day one near the Sheepwalk. More on this topic on pages 12 and 16.

The **September** meeting featured a look back at the Turnpike Era with a second visit from Milestone Society member Michael Knight. His research into the origins of Toll roads had uncovered a number of Acts of Parliament, including the 'Wheel Act' of 1690 which attempted to impose larger wheels on bigger carts. Enterprising owners set the wheels on an angle to get around the restrictions! The Turnpike system gradually spread outwards from London in the early 1700's and had covered the whole of the country by the dawn of the Railway era in the 1830's. Amongst interesting Milestones Michael Knight mentioned a rediscovered stone from Sutton which had helped mark the Stratton to Bury Turnpike road. Further information about milestones can be found at www.milestone-society.co.uk. More local milestone information can be found on page 11.

Archives

Peter, Christine, and I were busy until June working on our archives. We now have paper work in our archives in plastic wallets or boxes suitably listed and in order to find by subject. The next step with these will be to go through each sheet or document, identify by number and index them so that they can be found within a wallet or box. Perhaps of equal importance, this system will enable anyone to return any item to its proper place so it can be found quickly again. A volunteer or two to do this would prove to be of great advantage to the society.

We now have similar plastic wallets for all our scrapbooks which have been put together ever since 1977 by Patricia Yates and our scrap books of house sales complete with pictures of each house for sale, put together by Anita Lewis. Both of these types of scrapbooks are worth preserving properly as they are a valuable source of information.

We also have much older scrapbooks that have been donated to the society over the years and often prove of great help in providing information for our programme when we have local talks.

Finally it's not of much use having our archives if they are not used. Its for this reason that progress ground to a halt on them in June, as since then resources have been used extensively to prepare from our archives information and photographs for the '50 years of the clock house', our meeting in August on Utilities, 'Party on Potton' and Potton show. So you could say that when we are not building our archives up, we are taking them down. But! that's what they are there for and with a good system it is so easy to put them back together for some one else to use.

George Howe

Forthcoming Programme

Nov 23rd **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<<<

Dec7th **Pictorial Entertainment**
The Traditional end of year selection from our growing archives illustrating past and present changes in our area

Celebrations in Potton 2006

Potton has certainly been celebrating this summer and I would like through this newsletter to share these celebrations with you.

50 Years of the Clock House

After many years of existence the shambles in Potton market square fell into disrepair before the Second World War. The brick buildings that went with it also deteriorated badly during this time but lasted until 1955 when they were demolished. Plans were passed to replace all this with a clock house, which was built in 1956. This building housed the library that also celebrated its 50 years. The building was to have had two longer wings each end to house an electric transformer, but this idea never came about. The upper floor is used for local town council meetings. The original clock was housed in the new clock tower and its bell has tolled to the time around a lovely setting in the centre of the market square ever since 1901. This bell replaced an older one that was moved to the fire station in Brook End at that time.

Potton History Society decided we should celebrate the 50 years of the clock house and library and liaised with the library as to what we had in mind. The date of the clock house opening was 23rd July 1956 Saturday was considered a better time for an exhibition and 22nd July was set aside for us to hold an exhibition in the community centre. Our exhibition consisted of a photographic display of the shambles, market square and the clock house over the past 50 years. Keith Lawrence put on show his very fine detailed model of the shambles, complete with dioramas of buildings around the market square. We had this as a centrepiece with a continuous slide show of the shambles, market square and clock house. We also had a few slides of our fire brigade, as they requested to have a table to display their photos and memorabilia.

The following week the library held quizzes, competitions and displays celebrating their 50 years. This finished with prize giving on Friday 28th. July and a 50 year birthday party with a cake with the clock house shaped in the icing. The builders of the clock house in 1956 were Bulls of St. Neots. Eli Bull, who is now 90 years of age, helped build the clock house and very appropriately was asked along to cut the cake.

Many people gathered in the square to take part and witness the occasion, including dignitaries from the Bedfordshire County Council and our own Town Council. Once again the market square made a very fine setting for yet another celebration.

The Last Clock Winder

Owing to some inside information I was able to arrange for our photographic recorder Chris Miles to photograph the last winding of the clock house clock by our last town clock winder Tony Joel.

Yes you really have observed the clock is still going, well it did eventually. The old winding mechanism is still in situ, but an electric motor has now been fitted to keep the town clock showing the time to Pottonians and the town's visitors.

Well done Tony for your place in our Potton history book as the last town clock winder. We have presented Tony with pictures of himself winding the clock and of the clock house, as a thank you to him. This was the end of a long tradition that went on quite unnoticed over many years. Without this hidden job being carried out over the years, time might have stood still in the square.

George Howe

Party on Potton 2006

Two years from 2004 and we were ready to Party on Potton again. Our society was asked to dress a float with a theme on "The Movies". Our Potton car immediately sprang to mind as we could put wings on it to be "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang". I have to confess neither Beryl or I had ever seen the film. This was remedied thanks to Christine Harpur, who lent us the video. This was also done by other participants to refresh their minds, which was highly acceptable, as we do like a high degree of accuracy in the society. From this stage bigger things grew. I made a sketch on a small piece of paper next to the telephone and phoned prospective volunteers and, bless them, did they came up with the various items for the float.

Our excellent artist and model maker Keith Lawrence came up with most of the props. Brian Ritchie and Jenny looked after the wings, sky and positioning of the car to make it look like it was flying. Jenny also supplied some of the costumes. Ernie and Maureen Wood made good general assistants. The various salient points of the film were chosen for the float to show the story.

A week to go and all now was available except the windmill. I knew of some material in our rooms that might fit the bill. I arranged for Ernie and Maureen to be at the rooms the Tuesday before to generally get ready and to make the windmill. Keith and I brought some items over from his house and he became the chief mill maker, with Maureen becoming his very able assistant. Maureen has become a very efficient glue spreader. Brian came down to try the wings, and apart from painting, and a few other small jobs all was ready for Saturday 26th August.

Saturday morning arrived the weather was not too bad, although it looked like it might rain sometime. Chris Miles joined all those already mentioned and we dressed the float in the following order from front to back. A nice blue cloth made a backdrop for the

superb Bavarian castle, which faced to the rear of the float and was fixed to the front headboard. Myself and Beryl were King and Queen. My toy Jack in the box was Rachael. Sarah and Louise were in the child catchers cart (playpen) pulled by Keith's model horse. Chris was the child catcher and as we went slowly around Potton his child catchers net hovered over several small children amongst the crowds. We wondered how many of them had nightmares that night. Keith was the toy maker, who half way round had to ride his horse to keep it under control. Maureen held a banner "Bring our children back". The windmill came next, with Ernie playing the eccentric old granddad with his outhouse as his sentry box. Brian and Jenny were Caractacus Popp and Truly Scrumtious in the car flying through the sky.

The twinnings were over here at this time and we were privileged to have four guests from Germany on our float. They were Horst and Edith with their two children Alexander and Daniel who played the children riding in the back of the car.

All complete now and all those mentioned made an absolutely marvellous job of our float. 11.30am. was judging time and, as a very nice reward for all our hard work, we came second. Well done everyone.

Martin our driver eased us slowly out of Kitchener's yard at 12 O'clock noon, and with thanks to Benbo for the use of his lorry we were off around Potton on yet another procession. Pottonians were given the Royal wave from the King and Queen. Everyone on the float, including our guests, enjoyed riding around the streets of Potton amongst the crowds.

We paused at the fire station to let anyone off for the marquee. But it was back via Bury Hill, the church, Everton Road and Willow Road to Kitchener's yard to strip the float. After all that time to make and build, it takes no time at all to dismantle. But this was only the beginning of "Party on Potton" for the Society.

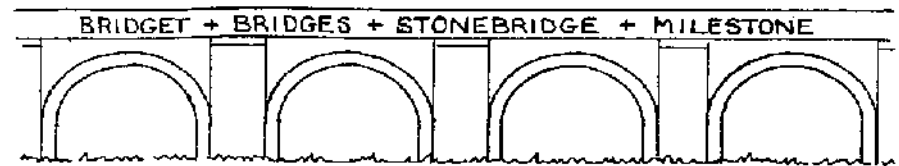
Potton Town Walk.

Our other involvement was at 10.00am on Monday morning when Peter Ibbett and I met at the marquee to escort participants around Potton. About 35 turned out for the occasion, some, which was very pleasing, being original Pottonians. After I welcomed all present, Peter gave a brief history of Potton. The weather was good for walking and we divided into two groups and had what I hope was a very interesting walk.

That concluded our society's involvement with 'Party on Potton' but as we record what happens in Potton, I will give a quick rundown of some of the other events over the weekend. Friday night kicked off with a family disco. Saturday, after the procession, a dog show and various events and what I personally always look forward to, the German band "Sounds Express", a very good dance and big band sound. Sunday morning three churches got together, Potton Vineyard, the Salvation Army and our Parish church for a service in the Marquee, which was very well attended. Posh picnic and a cricket match filled the afternoon whilst Sunday night's entertainment was "Grease". Not only music from Grease but many other pop songs sung, and performed very professionally by a five piece band, plus two girl singers and one boy.

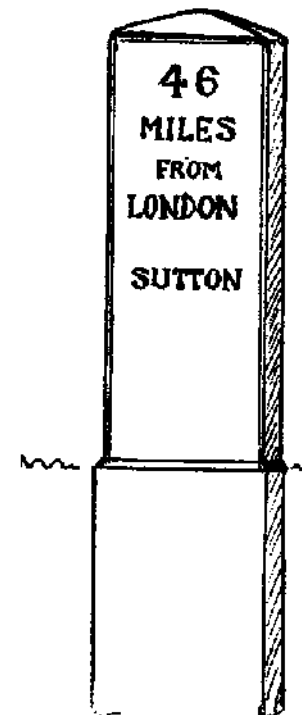
Our town walk started Monday off. Next came the now famous annual event down Bury Hill, possibly the only one on a closed public road in this country "The Soap Box Derby". In the afternoon was Olympic Sports and proving the highlight of the weekend as it is always fully booked "Stars in your eyes". This features all local talent drawn in from, of course, Potton and local towns and villages. Thus ended a highly successful and wonderful weekend of "Party on Potton". We look forward to 2008.

George Howe



In February our meeting was about 'The New Bridges at St. Ives', given by Bridget Flanagan. The Bury to Stratton turnpiked road with its tollgates and milestones crossed these New Bridges.

In Bridget's book a map of the route showed the approximate positions of each milestone. 28 Milestones were recorded, 14 of these in situ were put up by the Turnpike Trust, the other 14 showed the sites where the milestones have since been lost. One of these was positioned between Sutton Toll Gate (in front of Turn Pike Farm and has since been demolished in the 1970's) and Sutton Cross Roads.



In April the four-hundredweight milestone, 15 inches square and standing 5ft high, was literally unearthed after being buried for 66 years. It would seem that the lower 2ft would be set upright in the earth, leaving the top 3ft vandal proof above!

To have been found where Mr Stonebridge remembered it being buried and so recently - 2 months - after our Society's talk about Bridges by Bridget is quite a coincidence! I informed Bridget about the discovery and it seems the Milestone Society will possibly liaise with the District Council for it to be repositioned.

Keith Lawrence

POTTON, BEDFORDSHIRE.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale

Nineteen Shares

(Fully paid up) with the

CURRENT YEAR'S ACCRUING DIVIDEND.

IN THE

POTTON GAS & COKE CO., LIMITED.

To be Sold by Auction by

Mr. F. W. WESTERN

AT THE

"ROSE & CROWN" HOTEL, POTTON.

On FRIDAY, MAY 24th, 1907

At 7 o'clock in the evening, in 19 LOTS.

By direction of Mr. Robert C. Braybrooks,

Further Particulars may be obtained of Mr. F. W. Western, Auctioneer and Estate Agent. Offices: Bedford Road, Sandy, and High Street, Biggleswade.

PARTICULARS.

The Capital of the Company is £2,000 and is fully paid up.

The Dividend paid by the Company for the year ending 31st Decr 1906, was 4 per cent.

LOT 1:-

A **£10 SHARE** (fully paid up) with the current year's accruing Dividend, in the POTTON GAS AND COKE COMPANY LIMITED, Numbered 11 in the Company's Register.

LOT 2. A SIMILAR SHARE, NUMBERED 12.

LOT 3. ditto ditto 13.

LOT 4. ditto ditto 14.

LOT 5. ditto ditto 15.

LOT 6. ditto ditto 24.

LOT 7. ditto ditto 25.

LOT 8. ditto ditto 26.

LOT 9. ditto ditto 27.

LOT 10. ditto ditto 28.

LOT 11. ditto ditto 29.

LOT 12. ditto ditto 30.

LOT 13. ditto ditto 31.

LOT 14. TWO **£3 6s. 8d. SHARES**, (fully paid up) with the current year's accruing Dividend, in the POTTON GAS AND COKE COMPANY LIMITED, numbered 107 and 108 in the Company's Register.

LOT 15. TWO SIMILAR SHARES, numbered 109 and 110.

LOT 16. TWO SIMILAR SHARES, numbered 111 and 112.

An interesting example of the way business was conducted at the turn of the century, illustrated in this sale brochure from the society archives.

A 'nice little earner', perhaps, for those who could afford it, as well as being an essential commodity for the town.

**Extract From Biggleswade Poor Law Union Minute Book
5th December 1866**

A report by the Sanitary Inspector for the area.

This report is reflective of living conditions some 140 years ago.

POTTON

The high death rate from typhoid fever in this district has been caused by its being epidemic in some filthy places in the town; the town is well drained for surface water, there are no water closets discharging into the drains; cesspools and dumb wells are in vogue. On the whole the town is clean and airy, the exceptional places being known as Meeting Lane – In a house here where the four children had been ill with typhoid fever there are grids to drains just outside both the front door and back door, the latter one being in a filthy condition, as are also the outhouses and privies of all the row. The well is close to the drain. The water is said to be good, the well having been recently cleaned out: it was formerly thick and dirty.

Houses near the Pound – here is a house with 2 rooms, the living room 12ft square, the bedroom a little larger, but without a fireplace, and with small windows on one side of the house only, so that there could be no through ventilation, are living 11 people a man and his wife, two unmarried daughters with a couple of children each, and three other children. Three months ago eight of them had typhoid fever of which one died and a daughter who did not live there but who was in the habit of visiting them died from it also. The privy used by several houses was not in an offensive condition, but the contents are simply allowed to run out into a field behind. The well is deep and the water said to be pretty good but hard. There is no drainage, all slops etc. being thrown into pits behind the houses, which are very offensive. These houses are rendered uninhabitable at certain times by the offensive stench which is

blown to them from the heaps of London manure which are allowed to lie outside the station until wanted for the fields.

Franklin's Row – Here there are heaps of filth and stinking privies also in front of the houses.

Biggleswade End – This might have been named from its resemblance to the west part of that town. It consists of two courtyards which are sufficiently large but literally covered with filth; the drain is stopped up, the slops etc. are just thrown out in front of the houses and runs down towards the street. There is no well, water has to be fetched from the public house! There is one privy, found overfull, for nearly 30 people. The stench of the whole place is horrible; no wonder that there is always sickness here.

The Fellmongers Yard causes a nuisance in the neighbourhood but has not been a source of disease.

Jean McLennan

--oo0oo--

John Clare & The Ram

'I recollect at late evening going through Potton in Bedfordshire where I called in a house to light my pipe in which was a civil old woman and a young country wench making lace on a cushion as round as a globe and a young fellow, all civil people ... and happened with a kind-talking countryman .. I asked him whether he could tell me of a farmyard anywhere on the road where I could find a shed and some dry straw ... I will show you the place at the sign of the 'Ram'. I hobbled forward as well as I could ... and came at last to the Ram .. the lighted windows looked very cheering but I had no money and did not like to go in .. so still I travelled on.

John Clare:- Recollections of Journey from Essex July 1841

Potton Drainage

Mr Daniel Miller (Inspector of Nuisances) reported as follows:-

“Gentlemen, In accordance with your directions I have prepared and now present, plans for completely sewerage the town of Potton and disposing of the sewerage.

The population of Potton was somewhat over 2000 at the last census – 402 houses were inhabited, and nearly 20 have since been erected. A small stream skirts the eastern extremity of the town; its mean flow is about 250,000 gallons per day (24 hours); but during last summer its flow was much less. At present the liquid refuse from this town is discharged into the stream about 70 yards below Messrs Braybrooks works. On examination by the medical officer of health of two samples of water recently procured from this stream – one from above and one below the sewer outfall – it was apparent that this stream is much polluted by the discharge into it of the liquid sewage of Potton. It is unnecessary that I should dilate upon this point.

Most old towns, situated as Potton is, in close proximity to a stream, have drains leading thereto. No doubt these drains were originally intended to convey surface or storm water only, but in Potton, as elsewhere, house drains have, from time to time, been connected to the public drains, and a large quantity of refuse is thereby daily contributed to the stream. Independently of this, although the town has been healthy during the last year, its sanitary arrangements need improvement – at present cesspools and drains of very imperfect and rude construction exist in all parts of the town. These house drains are not constructed of impervious materials and in such porous sub-soil as that upon which Potton stands danger must always accrue from a water supply obtained from such a source. Cesspits and wells are in very many cases but a few feet apart, the water drunk is thereby polluted and disease is the result. Cases of Typhoid Fever occurred in the autumn of 1873 and were attributable to this cause.

In the scheme now submitted the sewers are laid out upon the modern rectilinear system, in perfect straight lines, with a man hole, or inspection shaft, at every angle. Ventilation will be effected by shafts, carried up to the roofs of houses. I have adopted this course in preference to the usual practice of ventilating the sewers at street level. The only exceptions will be at the dead ends of those branch sewers which do not terminate in the vicinity of dwelling houses. There the ordinary combined man-hole and ventilator will be adopted. All the sewers will be constructed of stoneware socket pipe and laid truly in line and gradient. With this new system all house drains must be connected, the present public drains being left to convey storm water only to the stream.

The gradients of the proposed sewers are favourable, and are as follows: Main sewer 1 in 500; King Street (north end) 1 in 300; Brook End through Market Place to Sun Street, 1 in 160; Meeting Lane 1 in 80; Horslow Street (North End) 1 in 90; Pound End 1 in 60; King street (South End) 1 in 250; Post Office Street 1 in 46; Bull Street 1 in 100; Horslow Street (South End) 1 in 70; Mill Lane 1 in 120; Sun Street 1 in 130; Horn Lane 1 in 154; Blackbird Street 1 in 80; Biggleswade End 1 in 47; Station Road 1 in 50; New Town 1 in 150. The total length of the sewer is 14,714 feet.

It will be noticed that the main sewer has much the slowest gradient; all available fall has been reserved for the branches. The main sewer, however, throughout its entire length of 3,148 feet can be flushed at pleasure from the Horse Brook; a flushing pipe is included in my estimate. This will be laid from the Horse Brook along the Causeway to the main sewer near Mr Bond's back gate. This point has been selected as involving no right of way. A sluice valve will be fixed in the man-hole here, and the main can thus at any time be flushed. Flushing gates will be provided in certain of the man-holes, and by these means the branch sewers may be flushed; at the dead end of every sewer a street gully will be placed in a suitable position for flushing the upper portions of the sewers.

The Rivers Pollution Commissioners have compared the sewage discharged from water closet towns with that discharged from towns in which no water closets are connected to the sewers, and they report that there is a 'remarkable similarity of composition between the sewage of midden towns and that of water closet towns, the proportion of putrescible organic matter in solution in the former is but slight less than that in the latter, while the organic matter in suspension is somewhat greater in midden than in water closet sewage. It is, then, evident that the outfall difficulty is no way lessened by adopting the dry earth system.

*

In my opinion the best way of disposing of the excreta and liquid refuse of this town is by means of a system of impervious pipes sewers laid with proper falls to insure a continuous and uninterrupted flow of all matters contributed thereto. This can be effected without difficulty; the sewage can be conveyed by gravitation to a proper distance from the town

*

All experience proves that is only by this application of sewage to land that the pollution of streams can be effectively prevented. The Rivers Pollution Commissioners in their final report, after a full and searching investigation of this question, state that the right way to dispose of town sewage is to apply it continually to land. Nature effects what the ingenuity of man has hitherto failed to accomplish and the land will absorb the soluble impurities which sewage processes fail to abstract.

I beg therefore to recommend the Sanitary Authority to acquire possession of the meadow-land shown and coloured green on sheets five and six of the plans now submitted; to construct here straining tanks shown on sheet seven. These tanks are required for arresting solid and sedimentary matters. To under-drain three acres of this land, three feet deep with drains 15 feet apart, a main drain to be laid from the lower end of this meadow through the north end of Sutton Park to the point A on sheet No 6., and thus discharge the effluent

liquid into the back water stream which runs through the irrigated meadows which forms part of Sutton Park Estate. The discharging level of this drain will be sufficiently high to admit of the effluent being again thrown over some 20 or more acres of meadow land now irrigated with water from the stream.....

The sewage sludge deposited in the tanks may be sold to gardeners or dug into that portion of land at outfall works not used for filtration purposes. The three acres of land under-drained will be divided into six plots of half an acre each; each plot will receive the sewage for one day – thus every plot will have five days rest. It will, in certain cases, be advisable to alter this course, and with some crops in dry weather a daily dose of sewage may be requisite. This land should be broken up to a depth of 15 inches previous to the application of sewage hitherto.

I estimate the total cost of completing these works, comprising sewers, man-holes, ventilating and inspection shafts, gullies, tanks, overflow pipe &c according to the plans now provided would amount to £1,486. This does not include the purchase or preparation of the ground.

In conclusion I beg leave to express my earnest hope that if the Sanitary Authority approve of the plans proposed they will as soon as possible take the necessary steps for obtaining the consent of the Local Government Board thereto. It is far more desirable to execute these works now at a time when proper attention can be given than to wait until some outbreak of epidemic disease which have befallen towns whose sanitary conditions have been in an equally unsatisfactory state. It is the opposite course that is generally followed, and, under the influence of panic, works are hurriedly commenced and hastily executed and frequently much larger sums are spent in this way than would have sufficed for the deliberate adoption and careful execution of a proper scheme at an opportune time.

Extracts from Newspaper cutting – March ? 1875.

The Sod. Trodden by Ancient Feet.

After Archaeologists Exploratory Dig.

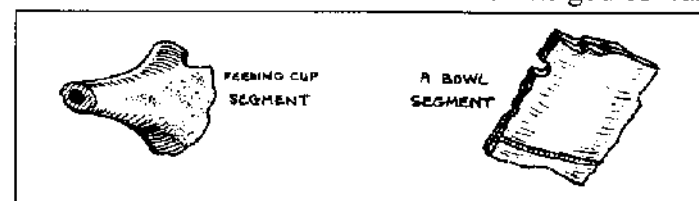
In mid-September the archaeological trenches had been filled in and it was now time for me to sort out any interesting artefacts that had resurfaced. My allotment had not been forgotten because a small glass object had caught my eye. It appears to have been a glass bead like ring – only half was found. Was it decorative, was it part of a game counter, or did it have some other use? That's unknown at the moment, indeed, not even its age has been established.

On the south field I found part of a glazed jug handle, the outer curved face of which had been spiked – a practice used by potters which aids the prevention of cracking in the kiln. I suppose it could be likened to the cook piercing the pie pastry to let out the heat and steam before placing in the oven. I have also noticed this spiking on other pottery handle shards. This sample was identified as medieval 13th/14th century.



From the excavated fields more samples of the rims of Roman mortarium dishes or bowls were picked up. A recent visit of mine to Colchester Castle Museum demonstrated how small my samples were and how large they could be. One almost complete sample in the Museum was a mortaria dish, at least 14" in diameter, presumably for grinding and mixing larger quantities of food – my sample I estimated at 11" in diameter. These were made of various fabrics (clays) in kilns at Stibbington, Cambridgeshire and at kilns in Oxfordshire, up to circa 350 AD. The colour on the embedded grinding grit on the inside of the dish could also vary.

Another shard, this time in red fabric, with a small spout attached, had on its outer face minute patchy flakes of a bronze colour still adhering to the surface. This was a process of decoration by the potter and was the result of dusting the wet surface of the clay with mica before firing. Being only a small sample it was only possible to give an approximate identification by the archaeologist. It was described as a feeding cup or an oil lamp filler. I did see similar shapes at Colchester Museum; they were described as drinking cups for patients or the elderly. (I think I'll get one of those for myself. Do you think I could contact an old Roman potter on the Internet, or did they use smoke signals from Vesuvius?) Incidentally, Colchester was the first Roman capital after their invasion of England; it was called 'CAMVLODVNMVM' which translates as 'the Fortress of Camulos'. Camulos was a Celtic god of war.



A rectangular shard, also from the field, was of red fabric with an internal grey core. The convex curved outer surface has a 1/16" wide shallow groove across the width near one end. Near the top of the left-hand side the edge has broken across half of a 5/32" diameter hole. This may have been a repair hole for a cracked bowl – where a hole has been drilled through the bowl near the edge of a previous crack, one hole each side. A lead dowel is bent and threaded through both holes and the protruding ends are flattened to secure the repair. Alternatively, the hole could be a series of holes round the bowl near the base, in which case it could be what is known as a cheese-wring. In preparation of cheese, the curd is wrapped in a cloth and placed in the bowl, a weight is placed on top of the curds, which squeezes out the whey. This drains out of the bowl via the holes. Some of these were made at Caistor St. Edmund circa 60-85 AD.

Keith Lawrence

