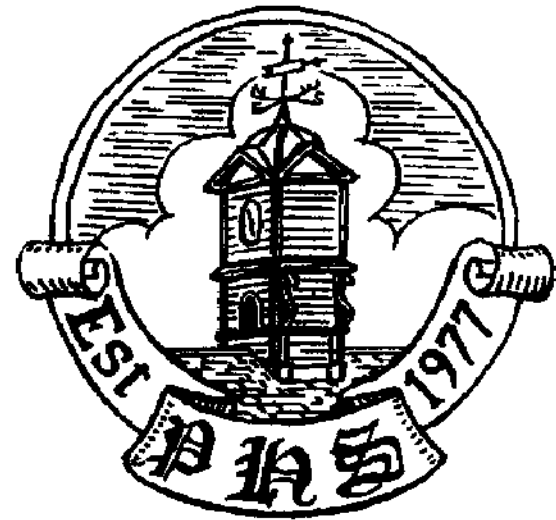


Dotton History Society



Newsletter Number 49 Autumn 2010

Contents

Society News	2
Forthcoming Programme	5
A Ring of Coincidences Join Around the World	6
Guess What They Were Used For?	8
Potton & District Working Men's Club	9
Another Interesting Find	12
The Continuing Story of Potton Flower Show	13
Another Australian Coincidence	16
The Coincidences Continue	20

Potton History Society Committee:-

Chairman	George Howe
Secretary	John Boston
Treasurer	Anita Lewis
Programme/Publicity Secretary	Peter Ibbett
Member	Sean Hendy
Member	Mike Horgan
Member	Jean McLennan
Newsletter Editor	Mary Leigh

For access to the archives in our research rooms
just telephone the key-holder;

Mr G. Howe Potton 260935

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
Clayton's Butchers

Society News

The **April** meeting featured Peter Ibbett talking about the history of the Market Square on which he grew up. He traced its early history in Medieval times when the market area stretched from the Brook to the current site of the square. The market developed into one of the best in the county with the building of a fine market house and butchers shambles by the early 1800's. The eruption of an Icelandic volcano in 1783 helped to cause an exceptionally hot summer and a 'Great Fire' which burnt our King Street and part of the Square resulted in a Georgian rebuilding of the Tysoe side of the square. The railway contributed towards a decline in the market and its fairs, which had gone by the 1930's. The rebuilding of the old buildings in the 1950's and the upgrading of the Square in the last couple of years have enhanced the community centre of the town.

A new leaflet, 'Potton Market Square Walk', was launched at the meeting and is available locally and from the society, together with a reprint of a booklet on the Square.

In **May** Anna Mercer, the Curator of St. Neots Museum, talked about the social history of ladies underwear by using a range of samples from the museum's collection. Throughout most of history valuable wool and linen material was constantly adapted and reused. The advent of the British Empire produced new fashions and materials giving a wider range of undergarments. The advent of the cycling era produced a demand for more practicable clothing and the production of artificial fibres allowed both practicability and fashion to become affordable for all.

George Howe and Peter Ibbett combined their talents for the **June** meeting with a presentation on the history of King Street. The present Tesco site has seen four major changes over the last 100 years, with the loss of a 1700's farmhouse and its replacement with one that was owned in the 1950's by Fred Tear. This was in turn replaced by a 1960's industrial development before the final redevelopment as the current Tesco site. The great fire in 1783

burnt King Street, from its Spencer Close starting point to the Market Square, subsequently giving the street a late Georgian character. Timber framed thatched cottages were replaced at the Manor end of King Street in the early 1900's to provide a better standard of housing for the growing population. King Street has lost three of its public houses:- The Bird In Hand; The Horse and Jockey and the New Inn leaving only the George & Dragon today.

The **July** meeting took the form of a visit to the British School Museum at Hitchin. In 1808 Joseph Lancaster visited Hitchin and inspired local solicitor and landowner William Wilshere to open Hertfordshire's first monitorial school. Society members were treated to two Victorian style lessons including less intelligent and well behaved members being required to wear a dunce's cap and take a caning! Members also enjoyed viewing the museum displays and visiting the schoolmaster's house.

An evening on the 1960's in Potton, presented by George Howe and Peter Ibbett, featured at our **August** meeting. Material from the Society archives was displayed on a new set of Society boards and also across three tables. The population of Potton grew from 2070 to 3026 during the decade. It was still a market gardening and land settlement town at that time, with one of the best tanneries in England. Old buildings such as the Hollies were swept away and new businesses such as the Silver-Felber group and Potton Timber appeared. The railway station closed and new housing appeared in areas such as Spencer Close and Judith Gardens. The materials stimulated memories and discussion that were recorded to add to the society archives.

In **September** David Short came along for his third visit to the society, this time to give an illustrated talk about "The History of Surnames". In the very early days, especially in small villages, most ordinary folk did not have a surname. Everyone knew each other and so the first, or christian name was the only name they required to identify each other. As the country became more populated and

especially in towns etc the need to identify one another became more essential. David explained how surnames could come from trades ie. carpenter, cooper, brewer, etc. Some would derive from the place a person came from ie. someone moving from Potton to a new place, might become known as Potton. He went on to give various other ways in which surnames evolved. Peter Ibbett had previously sent a selection of surnames of the good people of Potton for David to describe how they might have come about or where from.

The Potton Car

What is the next step to take for the continued restoration and preservation of "Little Eve"? On the advice of our Chief Mechanical Engineer, Brian, a strip down of the engine would be very sensible for the following reasons. To see what state the engine is in inside. Although the engine will and has run, it would be foolish to just keep running it and hope for the best. Once it is stripped down we can see if and which parts require replacement. There are no spares available as far as we have been able to ascertain and so we will have to look at the cost involved with any new parts. This is because any parts required will have to be made specially. There are places and people who do this sort of thing but as one-off's they come at a cost.

We can only hope at this stage, any remedial work will not be too costly. The benefits of carrying this work out are that we won't be running her until something goes wrong. This could possibly then become an enormous expense to rectify any damage. Also if we can strip, check and replace any worn parts, this work should assure the future of Little Eve to be able to run for a good while.

She put in an appearance at the Bedfordshire Local History Conference hosted by our PHS at Potton this year. She should be at Potton Show and we have been invited to take her to a show at Meldreth. It will be after these appearances before the above work will commence.

Party on Potton 2010

Many will be aware that the good folk of Potton have always been up to celebrate over the years. Coronations, Jubilee's, peace celebrations you name it Pottonians have celebrated it. The latest different one was the Millennium, which was 10 years ago. There were ten whole days of celebration in the year 2000. The Potton History Society, with your help, participated in these celebrations by putting on a play entitled "A Thousand Years of Potton", dressing up on a float, taking people on a guided walk around Potton and putting on an exhibition in the marquee.

It was decided by the Millennium committee to throw the gauntlet out for others to form a committee for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2002, this time it was over the August Bank Holiday and so Party on Potton was born, for us to party every two years. We the PHS have joined in the fun over these 10 years, by continuing to dress up and have a float in the parade. The History walks on the Monday have also become a regular feature.

This year 2010 will have seen a decade of Parties on Potton. We are planning a float, will be doing the History Town walk and as it is 10 years we will be putting on a photographic display of Potton Partying over this last 10 years and more. A full report will be in the next edition of our newsletter.

Forthcoming Programme

- Nov 25th Dunton**
The Story of Dunton using material in our archives and the memories and photographs of Robert Chessum
NB. 7.30pm start for AGM
- Dec 9th Pictorial Potton – Potton in 1910**
Our archives and a 1910 Trade Directory will bring a past era to life

A Ring of Coincidences Join Around the World

We often get enquiries from genealogists far and wide about their ancestors who were born or have lived in Potton over the centuries. It is not uncommon to have an enquiry from entirely different people from differing parts of the world for the same ancestors. But in February this year the following coincidences were more about the enquirers rather than the ancestors.

In February this year a Doctor John Graham Bymes, a geologist from Australia, was directed to me for his enquiry into the Warboys from Little Green, Guilden Morden. They were assisted immigrants to Australia by a Josiah Betts who was originally from Potton in the early 1800's.

During our exchange of e-mails John, whose interest lay more with geology than genealogy, mentioned that he sent any information on genealogy to a Richard Rogers in South Africa, who was John's daughter's father in law.

This set bells ringing as last year one Andrew Rogers came to the PHS for information on the Rogers family tree when they lived in Potton. When he came to me here in Potton, I was able to help him with his enquiries about the Rogers family at Potton several years ago and also show him a grave for them in our Churchyard. He also left the society a copy of his family tree. This Andrew Rogers was from South Africa, moved to England and was soon to emigrate to Australia. I asked John is this just a coincidence or could this Andrew be anything to do with the Richard Rogers from South Africa that he had mentioned. His reply came back to say yes and he was also John's son in law. But he knew nothing of his visit to Potton.

Well the story does not end there. A lady who was living in Lion Court, Potton Market Square during the time I was corresponding

with John, enquired as to any history of the building we might have in the society archives.

At this time I was still looking for information on the Betts family for John. One Friday evening I thought I would have a gentle look for any information we might have on Lion Court. As it is in the Market Square, I read through Peter Ibbett's book on the history of Potton Market Square. When I got to the last page, what did I find? An article entitled "Mathew Betts and Lion Court". How many times does this happen? This article explains that the Betts came to Potton in 1805/06 and purchased the shop and house which was at that time on the site of the existing Lion Court. There they became the fourth draper on the site since 1751. It states that Josiah Allen Betts arrived in Australia in 1833. His older brother John had preceded him, arriving at Sydney in 1830 and his mother Sarah with her remaining four children emigrated in 1837. This was useful information for John and brought to life a bit of Lion Court's history.

The last coincidence in this story comes from the researcher of the article in Peter's book. A Doctor Wiles made a visit to Potton several years ago to study the Betts family. Where did Dr. Wiles come from? --- Australia of course. He not only, with our help, studied the Betts and Potton Market Square but also Peter invited him to give us a talk on the subject. Not a coincidence, more the unusual, but it was good and an interesting talk. Did John know of this Dr. Wiles? He replied, no, BUT! I bet he does now.

George Howe.

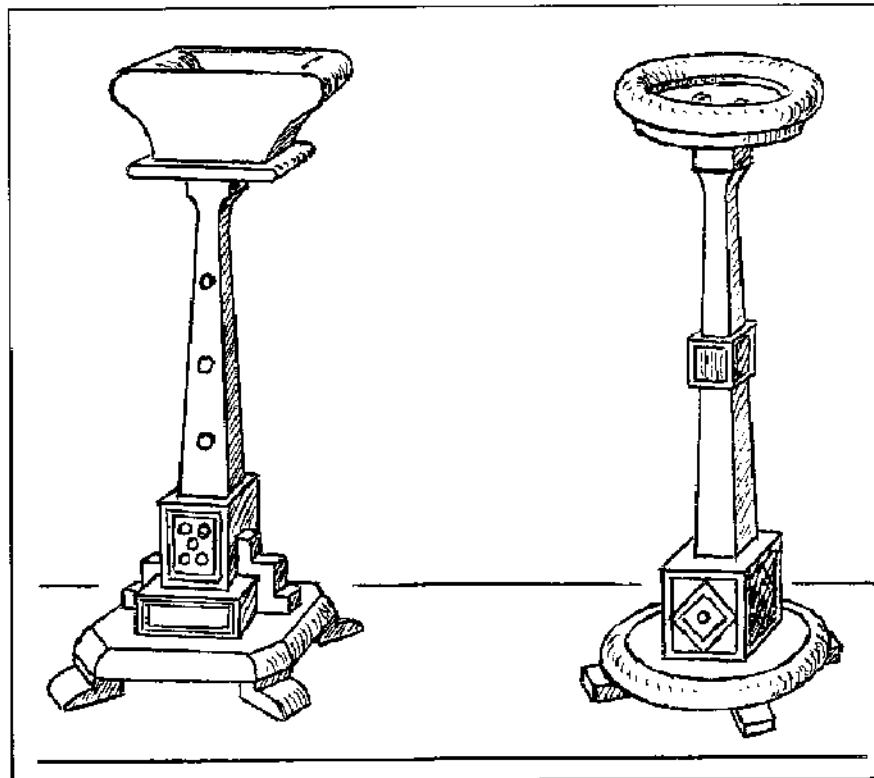
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The ring gets wider! Look out for another connection with Sydney, Australia later in the newsletter.

Guess What They Were Used For

When Keith Lawrence was asked by the owner if he knew what these objects were, he was soon able to identify them. How many of our readers can match his skills?

The objects are twelve inches tall, made of polished mahogany and decorated with marquetry.



Answer on page 19

Potton & District Working Men's Club

My first experience with what is now called the Potton & District Club & Institute Limited was in the years 1942/3 when I was aged 16/17 years old. I don't think legally anyone under the age of 18 should have been allowed in the Club but I presume the rules had been relaxed whilst the war was on.

Most lads of my age belonged to various organisations ie. Air Training Corps, Sea Cadets, Army Cadets, in readiness to getting called up for the real thing and in those days most of us didn't, or were not allowed by our parents to, go into Public Houses. The only place (slightly illegal) where we could go for relaxation was the Billiard Hall in Sun Street, which was also a confectionery shop run by a character and his wife. He was always known as "Boss" Coppen and he tried to keep us youngsters in order, not an easy task. There was just one billiard table, so there was always someone waiting to play. Towards the end of the evening, someone would always suggest playing skittles on the table. I don't remember much about this game except that it involved gambling and poor old "Boss" always used to get into a state worrying in case the police should visit and close him down.



Taking careful aim is Mr Morece Lindrum, and taking on is Mr Herbert Holt. Both are well known billiards and snooker players who visited Potton recently and gave an exhibition. Dec. 1932

It was the unspoken tradition when you reached a certain age you left Coppins and found yourself visiting the Club in Royston Street for your game of billiards (snooker wasn't the game then). I don't remember ever actually joining the Club or paying any membership fees but there again I suppose with the war being on, rules were relaxed somewhat.

The Club was a long wooden building situated in Royston Street, where the senior citizens bungalows are now. Again there was only one billiard table but there was the added attraction of a licenced bar where illegally (again) you could get a drink under age. Most of the members were getting on in years, veterans of the first world war but everyone seemed welcome and there was a real friendly atmosphere reigning in the building. I can't recall the steward at that time although the records I have show that in 1942/3 it was F Hutchinson and later on R Walker. I see from the records that no ladies were allowed in the Club at that time.

In 1944 I was called up for the Army so for the next four years my visits to the Club were very limited and rare. When I was demobbed I joined as a member and, apart from a few years when I was working long hours at Kempston, I have been associated with the Club ever since.

I had been asked many times about the origin of the Club but I could get no real concrete evidence when it started. I had so many conflicting reports and it was only when I became secretary a few years ago and found that we had most of the minute books that I decided to investigate further. There were some books missing but when I spoke to a former secretary two more were in his possession and he let me have them, with the result that I now have the complete records from 1930 to the present day.



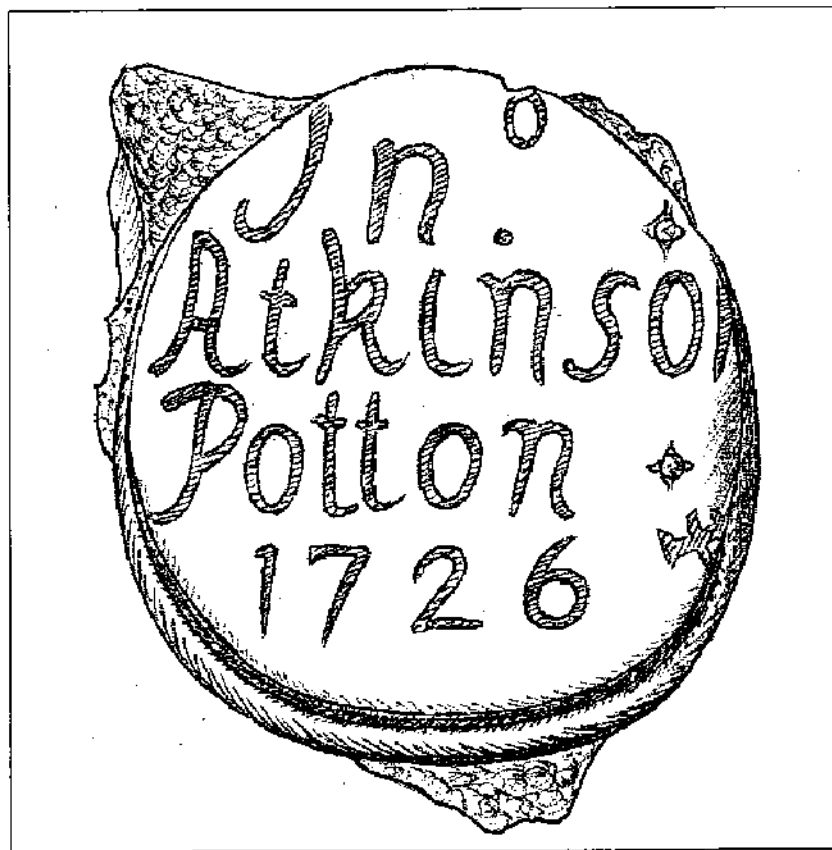
I was also handed a document which was an Indenture dated 7th November 1929 between THE UNITED SERVICES FUND and THE POTTON AND DISTRICT UNITED SERVICES FUND CLUB LTD. The Trustees of the latter are quoted as Henry Tysoe, Market Square, Potton, William Carter, Royston Street and Charles Pestell, Brook End. It states amongst other legal technicalities that the Society is a Club founded for the purpose of promoting the social welfare of ex servicemen. The Fund agreed to make a grant of £101.10s & 1p to the Society.

There is a list of conditions laid down by the Fund but the main ones are:

- "The Society's Club shall be and shall for ever hereafter remain open to and for the benefit of ex serving officers or men;
- The Society's Club shall be managed entirely by ex serving officers or men as hereinbefore defined;
- The Society's Club shall be kept free from party politics creed or party organisation;
- The object of the Society's Club shall be to raise the standard of citizenship both from a social and educational standpoint."

Ken Lawson. May 2010

Another Interesting Find



Another Vintage Olive Green Glass Seal dating from the mid 17th century, brought back to light by Ken Lawson. This matches the one found by Mr Hills in his Home Lane garden (see report by Patricia R Yates – Jan 2002, Newsletter Number 32, page 10).

A younger vintage, 1726, with the first initial different. Was it a replacement or was it an addition to their cellar?

KGL 2010

The original find, dated 1725, carried the name 'Mr Atkinson'. Patricia's research concluded that the bottle may have been used by the wealthy local family of John Atkinson. This new find with the first name abbreviated to Jn would seem to support that. Ed.

The Continuing Story of Potton Flower Show

For the 1985 show I proposed a vegetable section for novices. Tom Kitchener offered a Cup for this, which was used for the most points. This section is still going with varying support. It was also agreed to a class for salad vegetables as per RHS rules.

At the 1985 AGM, Roger Brewer stated that a record number of entries had been received, 1110 with 236 exhibitors. With these numbers the show had to be a success.

Market Day 1986 was to be the first one without a jumble stall, were we all becoming better off? One of the raffle prizes on the day was to be a chicken dinner complete with fresh vegetables. I don't think environmental health would allow this today. The outcome of this effort was a profit of £600 towards the expense of show day. It was agreed that a greater variety of plants should be grown for next year. As the show grows so do the expenses.

All went well on show day with 1039 entries from 200 entrants. This was the first year that we had been affiliated to the National Dahlia Society. Entries in this section were not improved with this and the chance to win a medal. It must have been a good show as I reported that many members of the public thanked me for putting on such a good show. Mrs Yates wrote to me thanking the Committee for letting her put on a history exhibition. This may have been the beginning of what still goes on today.

It was at the AGM following the show that Roger Brewer retired as Chairman. As a result of this I was elected as Chairman, a newcomer to such a position. It was straight in at the deep end and sorting out judges for the following year's show.

A variety of bedding plants for pricking out were ordered from Cliff King who, being in the 'trade', was very helpful to the show over the years. Bert Grevitt agreed to us having space in his greenhouses on Sutton Road to grow these plants on until Market Day in mid May.

A new problem for me was getting the schedules printed, previously done by Roger Brewer through his employer, Mid Beds Council. After getting two quotes it was agreed to stay with them but in the Minutes of the following month's Committee Meeting I see that schedules were to be printed by a man from Gamlingay for free. I cannot remember any reason for this but it may be that the Council was no longer doing any printing for itself and out-sourcing everything. One thing that was needed then and still is, more helpers.

By the following month we heard that the Gamlingay man could no longer print out schedules. After reading through the next three month's Minutes of Committee Meetings I could find no mention of how or where the schedules were to come from. I remember somehow getting the phone number of a printer in Cambridge, this in the days of proper printing, remember. After a few phone calls my wife took me to meet this printer in some out of the way factory unit. We discussed the work needed (copper plates had to be made for the cover and adverts) and agreed a price and a date to be ready.

This worked out ok we collected and paid on the agreed date, but by now time was getting on for the distribution of them. But it all ended well.

A Committee Meeting was held as usual ten days after the show. This becomes an inquest on what went wrong on the day while things are fresh in peoples memories. This can pinpoint little things that will make it easier and quicker next year.

On the whole it was a good show with entrants up by twelve, a step in the right direction. Unfortunately we had some rain in the afternoon which brought to an end the children's dancing organised by Penny Cheshire. This was the first time the show had been troubled by rain and was to be the last for many years.

The AGM showed we had received even better support from the public and local traders. With the income from adverts, the actual cost of the schedules to the show was only £10. The evening barn dance was also well supported. Market Day receipts for plant sales were also well up, in all a successful year.

No rest for the Committee though as it is straight on to organising the events for 1987. At the first meeting a letter was received from CSE Marshall's seed merchants of Wisbech offering a discount on seeds ordered from them plus vouchers for the show. This was agreed and is something I still do today. Mainly for the allotment plot holders but the show still benefits.

The printing of the show schedule was discussed and Sheila Woods was to get a quote from a printing company. From here I was to meet Barry Green of Sandy to discuss the printing. We came up with a price of £170 for 16 pages or £210 for 20 pages. This was agreed as a reasonable price and was accepted. Tony Joel and Colin Buxton were to take all the paperwork to Cambridge on Wednesday; and its still only mid April.

We were now well into bedding plants and a watering rota was drawn up to share the work around. It was every day and could take an hour or more.

The next meeting was to be held at Bert Grevitt's on Sutton Road, sorting out bedding plants ready for loading onto a truck on Saturday morning. Market day came and went and was even more successful, with profits clearing the £1000 mark for the first time. Very welcome with expenses rising every year.

Show day soon comes and goes and is followed by a Committee Meeting for nitpicking. With various people learning what goes on and how to do it this is bound to happen. Experience comes with time, not overnight. Looking back over the years some things, amaze me they are so trivial.

Colin Buxton

Another Australian Coincidence

Looking through old copies of our local newspapers an item caught my eye 'News from Australia from a Biggleswade Emigrant'. It was a letter from a Mr A E Field, a young Biggleswade carpenter. How apt, I thought, it fitted in with my dream trip on the SS Great Britain in my article 'Voyage of Discovery' in our Newsletter no. 46 Spring 2009. This time it isn't a voyage of fiction but one of fact and reads as follows:-

"I had a very nice voyage and greatly enjoyed it after the first two days were over. (could that be a rough start in the bay of Biscay?). The living was all that could be desired for 3rd class. We had a fine time on Christmas Day, having all the Christmas delicacies. We stopped at Las Palmas one day and I took the opportunity of going ashore. We anchored a long way from the shore and we had to get a boat to take us to land. The first thing that struck me was a motor made by the Commercial Cars of Luton. I went up to the driver and I asked if he came from Luton. He said he did and he was pleased to meet me. He had been at Las Palmas about 3 months so he knew it pretty well and he showed me round the city. Here I was struck by the great number of English made goods. (What a turn around?) I do not know what the tariffs are there but whatever they are didn't keep them out. Fruit was very cheap there. I bought about 100 oranges for 1/-, (I bet he made a profit when he got back on board) and bananas were equally cheap.

After my Luton friend left me – for he had to go on duty early in the afternoon-, I had a rather amusing experience at my own expense. I went into a grocer's shop and I wanted some of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits which I saw on the counter. I could not make him understand what I wanted so I weighed them out myself and laid down the money and he charged me at the rate of 1/10d a lb. I asked him if he thought I was English and to my surprise he said 'Yes'. Of course, I tried to get some more change but he sat too tight (Ha Ha).

As we entered the harbour at Las Palmas we saw scores of boats coming to meet us and they were all racing to get to us. As they got nearer we saw the boats were laden with fruit. After we had anchored they threw lines up to us and we could buy what we wanted as they could understand a little English, but this was not allowed and a sailor was kept busy cutting the lines, he was always making sure that we had got our goods and not a few of us got them without paying for them. After a while some were allowed to come aboard after being closely examined by the doctor. When I was in Las Palmas I saw some of the worst creatures of humanity I ever saw. The markets were lined with beggars holding out their hands for coppers from people who came to buy. The police at Las Palmas carry revolvers and swords and are very much like soldiers which the city is over-run with.

After leaving Las Palmas it became very warm and we were allowed to sleep out on deck, and a good number of us did so. We were then all getting excited over the election and a good many debates were held on board. I came across one man who came out of Kent and he told me he was leaving the old country because he could not get the land, so he was going to take some in Australia and try his luck. I might say that we got all the chief news from home posted up every day as the boat was fitted with wireless telegraphy. After a good voyage we arrived at Cape Town and stayed there a day and a night. There I met an old Biggleswade boy - Colin Smith – and he showed me all around Cape Town and district, including the late Cecil Rhodes place at Wynberg. I found goods there very dear as there was a tax of 12½ and 15 per cent on English and foreign goods respectively. There was nothing less than a 3d fare on the tram.

After leaving the Cape we ran into a little rough weather. We did not get any news after we were two days out from Cape Town but heard enough to know which way the election was going. Very often I wished I was there to help in the fray. When we neared Melbourne we heard the full results which were posted up on the ship notices and we cheered to the echo when we saw that the Liberals had won.

We had a stay of four days at Melbourne so you see I had the chance of a good look round and I greatly hesitated which place I should stop at as I have already stated I was offered work but decided to go on to Sydney. There is plenty of work here for farm hands, only those who come out must not think that their bread is buttered. They have got to work and according to what I am told by some who have been in the bush, as we call it here, the living and accomodation is none too good. But they all tell me that they can save money there, as there is nowhere to spend it.

I'm receiving the 'Biggleswade Chronicle' quite safely and I welcome the news very much, although the papers are a month old when they arrive here. I am pleased to tell you I have obtained work, which was very little trouble. In fact, the employers actually came on board the boat in Melbourne and asked for the carpenters that were on board to see if we would start work for them. I have obtained work on Sydney here under the government and am working on the harbour, building large stores or sheds. The rate of pay is 1/4½d an hour. I find living here very cheap. You can get a 3 course meal for 6d, including tea or milk. House rent is very dear compared with it at home. As for clothing, boots and household utensils, I see there is very little difference. Sydney is a very pretty place and the harbour is a splendid one."

So there you are, had I continued my 'Voyage of Discovery' I feel that I would have had something to write about along these lines. I find it a pity that the local papers of today seem to lack the ability to fill their pages with such interest as I found in reading this letter from all those years ago. It was sent at the end of 1910 and his letter was published in the Biggleswade Chronicle dated Feb 24th 1911. They sure published news in those days.

Keith Lawrence

P.S. He didn't say what ship he was on, I wonder if anyone is up to the challenge of finding out. Perhaps on the internet?

Our theme of coincidences arises yet again, as this article from Keith was handed in for publication at the last minute and he had no knowledge of the other Australian connections that were already included in the newsletter.

It is interesting to note, also, that the journey must have taken place in the autumn of 1910, exactly 100 years ago. The date is verified by the mention of the election, which took place in 1910.

To set the scene for the young man's journey, Keith has found some other events that took place in 1910.

- Over 100,000 dockers sacked, 10,000 Welsh miners strike in sympathy, troops are sent in to maintain order.
- The first 80 Labour exchanges are opened.
- Dr. Crippen is sentenced to death for poisoning his wife.
- The Girl Guides are founded.
- Talking pictures pioneered by Thomas Edison.
- Mount Etna erupts.
- Halley's Comet is visible.
- Notable deaths include Florence Nightingale, Edward VII and Mark Twain.

--oo0oo--

Did you guess correctly?



The objects are felt hat stands. The hatpins are kept in the top.

The Coincidences Continue

Glancing through my files recently, I discovered that the Society's first newsletter was issued in Autumn 1980, thirty years ago and three years after the conception of Potton History Society. Amongst the contents of the 10 pages, I found a message from the chairman, Norman Parry, a report on the progress of the photographic collection from the secretary, Patricia Yates, and the feature article by Peter Ibbett entitled "Davies The Draper". The Davies family almost certainly occupied the very same building as the Betts family who emigrated to Australia in George's 'Ring of Coincidences' (see page 6) and it would seem that the shop continued as a drapers, albeit with a variety of owners, for almost 200 years from the date of 1751 quoted in Dr Wiles report.



The shop was purchased by W J Valentine in the 1890's and traded as a drapers under that name by all subsequent owners until the shop closed in the 1930's. The building was then converted to a single dwelling house and was more recently converted to flats.

Little did any of us think, back in 1980, that the pages of our first newsletter could one day be read by families throughout the world, at the touch of a button.

Mary Leigh

NOTICE BOARD

www.pottonhistorysociety.com

Don't forget to have a look at the new web site. Did you know that you can view all our previous newsletters on the website and read the complete contents of each one? If you missed Keith's article in no.46 or Patricia's article in no.32 you can catch up online.

Newsletter no.50

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome, no matter how short or long. Please pass items to Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue is 1st February 2011.