

Potton History Society



Newsletter Number 22 Spring 1997

Potton History Society Committee:-

Chairman	George Howe
Secretary	Mary Leigh
Treasurer	Anita Lewis
Programme/Publicity Secretary	Peter Ibbett
Committee Members	Boo Matthews
.....	Jack Hutchinson
.....	John Kirkby
.....	Norman Parry
.....	Tony Crossley
Newsletter Editors	Mr & Mrs Leigh

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

Mr J Hutchinson	Potton 260322
Mr G. Howe	Potton 260935
Mrs M Leigh	Biggleswade 314024
Mr N Parry.....	Potton 260728

Acknowledgements:-

Our continued appreciation to Mr Witten for displaying and selling our publications in Tysoe's Hardware Store.

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

Lindsay's Bakery, Tysoe's Hardware Store,
Harper's Barber Shop, Burgoyne Middle School,
and Sandy Upper School.

Society News

Our AGM in **November** brought no changes to the society, as the committee was re-elected en bloc. This does not, however, mean that things are at a standstill, as we have many plans for the future, to be revealed as we approach our 21st anniversary, and subsequently the millennium.

The speaker for November was Jason Doherty, Museums Officer for Bedfordshire, and his enthusiasm for his subject gave us all inspiration for the future of the Society. He outlined the history of museums in this country and how they can be developed as we move forward into the age of technology.

As the festive spirit descended upon us in **December**, we were entertained in great style by a local history quiz arranged by Peter Ibbett. As well as being good fun, the quiz enabled both the old Pottonians and the newcomers to learn a little more about their home town and its fascinating history, using information and photographs from the Society archives.

In the new year we returned once again to the subject of museums, when Potton resident Anna Mercer told us how the recently opened St Neots Museum, of which she is curator, came into being. We saw how the disused Police Station and Court House was converted, the setting up of the initial exhibitions and the way exhibits are constantly being changed and improved.

In **February** we renewed our acquaintance with Ron Roper, first encountered on our coach trip to North Bedfordshire when he provided a guided tour of Bromham Mill. This time we discovered that his love of water mills also extends to wind driven mills and a very large audience was entertained by a delightfully detailed look at examples of both types of mill in the locality.

Water featured again in **March** when John Shepperson took us back to the Spring of 1947 and the floods which devastated many areas of the country. The talk centred on the Fenland village of Swavesey and the excellent slides, together with Mr Shepperson's vivid narration of events, left us with a feeling that we had all lived through the horrors of those disastrous times.

One of the major achievements of this winter has been the restoration of the two paintings of Potton Manor prior to 1874. Although the paintings themselves were in relatively good condition, the ornate gilt frames were in a very sad state of repair; Keith Lawrence was, fortunately, glad to accept the challenge. The task is now complete and the pictures are hanging resplendent on the walls of our archive rooms looking more magnificent than any of us ever imagined. All that remains is to record a heartfelt thank you to Keith for 3 months of dedicated hard labour. He has written a detailed account of the restoration undertaken and I am pleased to include some extracts later in the newsletter.

In the early part of the year Mrs P Thwaites and Mr R Darlow visited an elderly Potton resident and encouraged her to relate her memories of a lifetime in the town. Using the Society's recording equipment, they were able to make a valuable addition to our existing small collection of taped memories. The equipment is available for any member to use, either to record your own memories or those of someone you know who likes to recall times gone by. Our thanks to Pat and Bob for taking the time to organise the recording and also for typing up the transcript, some of which I have reproduced in this newsletter.

Monthly archive evenings have continued throughout the winter season and much of the backlog of filing has now been cleared. Members are welcome to come along to any of these evenings, either to browse through the archive collection or to assist with the sorting and indexing of material.

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As well as a steady flow of photographs, other recent additions to the archives include:-

- 'Apple Years in Cockayne Hatley' and 'The History of Cockayne Hatley and its Lords of the Manor', both books by Tony Crossley
- A daguerreotype of John Fox Burgoyne.
- Name plaque from the demolished Salvation Army Barracks (more recently used as the Scout Hut.)

Forthcoming Programme

May 22nd Potton Revealed

A chance to see some of the fascinating items in the archives.

Jun 26th Tempsford Airfield John Button

Find out more about its secret wartime activities. Check for transport details as the meeting will take place at Tempsford.

* Note 7.30 start *

Jul 24th Bedfordshire Rural Life Marian Nichols

The Principal Keeper at Stockwood Country Park gives a foretaste of the area we shall be visiting on our coach trip.

Aug 28th Potton Families

An evening devoted to our members own revelations about their ancestors. Bring along your own information to add to our archives.

Sep 25th Inn Signs Laurie Jordan

One of our members reveals the results of his research.

Oct 23rd An East-Anglian Journey H W Brown

A pictorial journey celebrating the East Anglian landscape.

21st Year 1998

We intend to celebrate 21 years of active work by providing a special set of meetings in 1998 devoted to the history of Potton.

We are looking at the following topic areas:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Working the Land | 7. Potton for the Cup |
| 2. Markets and Trade | 8. Education and Schools |
| 3. Transport and Travel | 9. Celebrations |
| 4. The Manor Mystery | 10. Musical Potton |
| 5. Potton People | 11. Two Decades of Change |
| 6. Potton Buildings | 12. Potton Walks |

We would like to involve as many local people and organisations as possible. Please let us know if you have any contributions that you could make or can put us in touch with others who might be able to help us produce the best programme yet!

United Reformed or Congregational Church

The change of use of the church prompted a search to see what could be found of the history of the site prior to the foundation of a place of worship in 1848 when John Clayden, a schoolmaster became the first minister. The first deeds are dated 23 July 1853 and because the church was run by trustees the document is annotated that it had been enrolled in the High Court of Chancery on 17 January 1854 but it was not until 28 July 1854 that the change of ownership was entered in the Manor Court book of Potton Much Manured.

The Manor document states that Thomas Hagger, gent of Northampton and his wife Francis Mercy Hagger sold part of his property including a cottage and garden for £350 to the following:- Thomas Strickland - brewer; James Shrosberry - draper; Charles Bond - grocer and druggist; James Judd - draper and grocer; John Edwards - farmer; John Clayden - schoolmaster; John Paine - draper; John Tyler - innkeeper and William Cooper - farmer. All were from Potton with the exception of Cooper who came from Meppershall.

Thomas Hagger had inherited the property and others from his father, another Thomas, in November 1846 and had sold part a year later. The trust deed states that the property was formerly in the occupation of Samuel Luke and Francis and Ann Dix and then of John Keal; the Manor books give more detail of the various owners. Thomas Hagger senior appears to have been something of an entrepreneur, he is sometimes described as an auctioneer, a blacksmith and as a gentleman, he is known to have been market supervisor and he was involved in the building or rebuilding of the shops on the eastern side of the Market Square. He received the Sun Street properties in December 1843 from his daughter Hannah, who gave them to her father because of the love she felt for him. She had purchased the same in March of 1837 for £725 from John Keal, a surgeon, and his wife Anne.

The Keals had owned the property from 1824 when they had acquired it from John Randall Stacey, a cabinet maker and upholsterer from Peterborough. The price was £570 and there was a mortgage at 4% to William Ades of Oakham in Rutland. The descent is again said to be from Samuel Luke and Francis and Anne Dix but then the names of John Lucas and William Faulkner are added before Keal. Stacey had inherited from Mary Lucas, the sister of his mother, Martha Stacey, sometime in 1820 or 21. John Lucas, described as gentleman, from Huntingdon and his wife Mary paid £540 for the property to Thomas Waters of Eyeworth in August of 1812. This was the same price paid by Waters when he bought from William Woodham and his wife Mary in 1809. At this time Waters is said to have been of Newtonbury, Dunton, formerly of Eyeworth and the Potton property to have been occupied by Francis and Ann Dix. Although their names appear frequently it seems that they were tenants and never owners.

Woodham, a gent, and his wife, both of Gamlingay acquired the property from Joseph Hinson and his wife Sarah in July 1806. Joseph was an attorney who seems to have come to Potton after his first marriage in 1774. From June of 1785 until April of 1793 he was Steward of the Potton manors for Viscount Torrington. After the death of his first wife in 1791 he married Sarah Burnell, nearly thirty years his junior and the owner of the property in Sun Street. Sarah is described as the only child and heir of Alice Burnell (nee Luke), late wife of Francis Burnell, surgeon. At last the name Luke appears. Samuel Luke, steward of the Manors from March 1745 to December 1752, died in 1754. Under his will his property went to his grandson, also Samuel, for life, then to his heirs if any and if there were none to a granddaughter Termaria Luke for life and then to another granddaughter Alice. Termaria and the younger Samuel died within a month of each other in 1805 and Alice in 1806 as also did Joseph Hinson. His widow Sarah moved to Huntingdon where she died aged 54 in 1825.

Samuel Luke's wife, also named Termaria, was the daughter of Richard Lee, the owner of properties in Clifton, Roxton, Wyboston and Eaton Socon in addition to Potton. She and her brothers are mentioned in Richard's will dated Feb 14 1707/8. A document in the Wade Gery collection refers to Samuel as being the trustee of the estate of Robert Lee at Honeyden, Eaton Socon, and it appears that he, Samuel acquired the Potton property from Robert who was not his father's favourite son, or from Robert's nephew Richard.

What is noticeable in the above account is that there were thirteen owners of this particular property in less than fifty years, the majority of them being from outside Potton. The only tenants quoted were Francis and Ann Dix and William Faulkner, although there may have been others whose names were not recorded in the Manor books. Property and also land was being used as an investment by those with money to spare, in this case it would appear to have been mainly in the medical and legal professions. It would be interesting to compare these deeds with those for other similar properties near the town centre.

Norman Parry

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Bedfordshire Local History Association

The AGM will take place at Newnham Middle School, Balmoral Avenue, Bedford, on 10th May 1997 at 2:15 pm and will be followed by a talk on Manors and their records by Kevin Ward.

The Association has been much concerned by the impending demise of the Bedfordshire Magazine after 50 years of publication. Happily a new editor has now been appointed and the future of the magazine has been assured for at least the next 2½yrs. A two year subscription costs only £18 (post free), leaflets from Mrs J Curran, tel. 01525 221963.

A Job Well Done

After renovating the two paintings Keith Lawrence wrote a detailed account of his work so that the methods and materials are recorded for future use. Here is a small part of that account.

In October I was asked by Mrs Mary Leigh if I would be willing to take on the task of renovating the two picture frames and remounting the two beautifully detailed water-colour pictures of "The Old Manor, Potton, recently destroyed, 1874". I was delighted to have been chosen by the committee of the Potton History Society to be entrusted with the safe keeping of these two rare works of historic interest. To have the views of both front and rear of this Old Manor from the past is a wonderful record indeed for our History Society.

My brother-in-law, Ken Lawson delivered the frames and pictures to me at the beginning of November. The moulded frames were in a decidedly dirty, untidy state, with pieces of the ornate mouldings missing from various places. They were heavily ingrained with numerous layers of gilding paint or varnish, that had over the years become tarnished and some corners of the frames had become opened out. Although the mounting boards and mount frames were stained with age and in tatters, the pictures were in a remarkably sound condition with only one or two patches of the sky paintwork peeled off.

The backboards were of sheets of wood and warped with age - these I would replace with hardboard - the backs of these boards had been sealed with brown paper on which there was a stamped addressed label. The stamp was a SIX PENCE STAMP with the head of King George V (a pinkish red stamp). It had been franked with a rectangular stamp //MINGHAM, Parcel Post, 11, 8 AUG 32 (the hatched part of the word was missing). The address label was from Bartons (Birmingham) Ltd. Cosway Works, Finch Rd., Birmingham, with a hand-written address to a Miss M. E. Smith, 264, Southdown, Gt. Yarmouth. The History Society had looked inside these frames for other clues as to there origin but nothing was found. Only one picture was initialed by the artist and that was 1874.



*Front of the Old Manor House, Potton.
Sketched from a Watercolour By J.B. 1874.*

Keith also did pen and ink drawings from the paintings, above is the front view. The water-colours were in fact left to Eric Jakes in the will of Miss Smith, daughter of Henry Smith who owned the Manor House which existed in Potton for the greater part of this century. This house stood close to but not on the same site as the house in the paintings. Mr Jakes has left the paintings in the hands of the Society on a long loan basis.

I will end with the Post Script to Keith's account.

I feel sure that the artist who painted these two pictures would be very pleased to know that since they were painted in 1874 they are now, after 123 years, in 1997 in the protective hands of the Potton History Society and I'm sure that we would all thank him, or her, for leaving us such a wonderful record of part of Potton's history.

K.G. Lawrence

By the way, you will be pleased to note that my wife Brenda is also very pleased, "cos we can now use our dining room table once again!

Memories of a lifetime in Potton

In February 1996 Pat Thwaites and Bob Darlow recorded the memories of Mrs Violet Louise Taylor, nee Dennis (born 1903). The following extracts are taken from that recording.

I was born in Horne Lane, the house that is Mr. Hill's now. My father was a shepherd, he was born in the same house. My mother was from Moggerhanger, they met when she came to Potton to work at the Manor. They met at John Saville's; he had a pub at the far end of King Street. Mum says she used to cook for 16 people at the Manor.

We used to visit my mum's family at Moggerhanger; we would travel on the train as far as Sandy and walk from there. The next station was at Blunham so it was just as quick to walk from Sandy.

At Horne Lane we used to grow apples, plums, gooseberries, raspberries and we had bees. We sold honey and fruit and flowers. I remember every Sunday John Duffin who lived up the top of Sandy Road used to come for a buttonhole. It would be a carnation and some fern, and he would pay a penny. No end of young men used to come for buttonholes on Sundays. People used to go for walks on Sundays all dressed up.

My father kept the sheep at the hollow; it was owned by Home Farm. He used to have to take them all round the town to the station, they wouldn't go past the tanyard - he had to go right over Sutton Road, Wrestlingworth Road, Hatley Road, it was all meadow land. He would have two men helping him move hurdles around.

I went to school at Moons Corner. You could leave school at 13 if you had a job to go to. My papers came back and

Headmaster Bartle said " Do you want to stay or do you want to go now?". So I left and I went to Carbutt's Brewery to see after their daughter while Mrs Carbutt helped in the Office; her husband was manager of the Brewery. The Brewery was where the Co-op stands now. They used to keep their horses at the back of the Rose and Crown yard. They bottled the beer and used to go out as far as Longstowe with it.

After Melvene went to school they wanted me to stay working in the brewery but when I told my mum she said you'll get another job better than that so I left and went to Tysoe's shop. Old Mr Tysoe had no wife, Miss Gardner lived there, she was his housekeeper. He had an entrance in the Twitchell, with chrysanthus each side of it. There were cobbles to the double gates that opened into the blacksmiths.

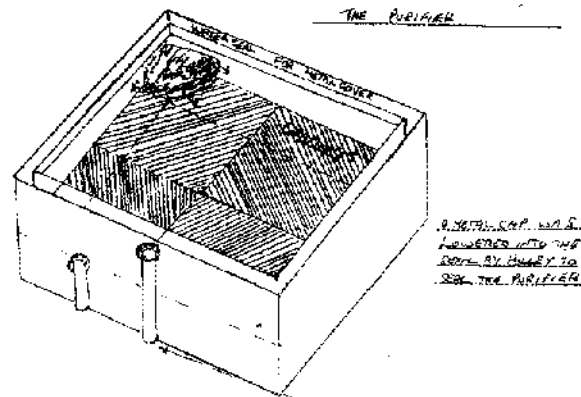
Tysoe would go out and get orders and I would deliver them, through Wrestlingworth and Guilden Morden all on a bike. I remember once he tied a rake on the bike and I had to deliver it to Stratford, Sandy. I used to go to Everton and Sandy, often didn't meet a soul on the way. I delivered to ordinary houses not shops, sometimes met a horse and cart but that's all. Tysoe didn't sell bikes, the bike shop was in the Shambles - Perry. I can remember a cake shop there and Spriggs the shoe man and Charlie and Billy Reynolds were on the corner nearest Tysoe's with their betting shop. The shops went all round in a square.

Mr Tysoe used to let me use his bike to go out. We used to go to the ballroom at Girtford Bridge, it cost 6d. It was from 6pm till 10pm. When I left Tysoe's he sent Miss Gardner round to my mum's to ask why I wasn't stopping because they were pleased with me, but I got fed up with all the biking. I used to start at 7.30 or 8 and the shop didn't close till 6 o'clock.

The complete transcript of this recording is held in the Society's archives.

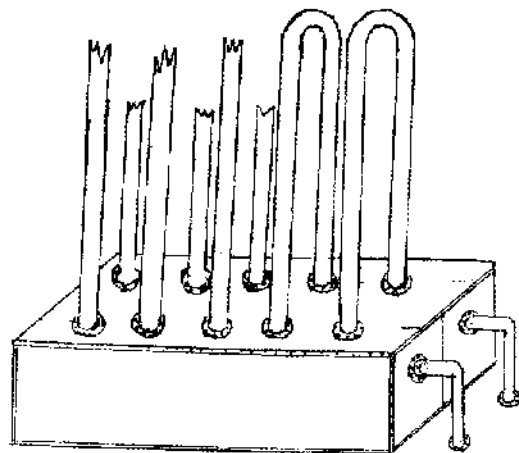
Potton Gas Company - Part 2

In the last issue Donald Huckle gave a description of the gas process which was carried out at the Potton Works. He has now supplied these sketches to illustrate the process he described.



A METAL TRAY WITH
HINGED LID THE
DOOR BY HANDLE TO
SEE THE PURIFIER

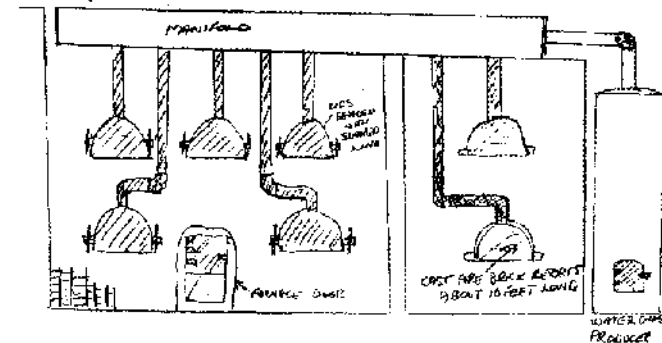
CLEANS GAS BY REMOVING FROM THE TOP OF THE TRAY
FEW SCALDINGS THROUGH PIPE AT END. LEVEL
THE GAS PASSES THROUGH A THIN LAYER OF IRON SHIP
ON THE GRATING SEEN BEHIND



GAS COOLING PIPES

DONALD HUCKLE
1896

GAS RETORT ASSEMBLY



DONALD HUCKLE
1896

Extract from Local Newspaper of 29th October 1897:-

GAS COMPANY.

The annual meeting of the shareholders of the Potton Gas and Coke Company was held at the Rose and Crown Hotel on Monday. Mr. A. Richardson was elected Chairman for the ensuing year; Messrs. Edwards and A. Richardson, the retiring Directors were re-elected, and Messrs. G. Kitchener and W. Perry were elected Directors. The Secretary presented the accounts, which were passed, the receipts being £366 11s 5d and the expenditure £320 15s 3d, leaving a balance of £45 16s 2d. This amount the Directors recommended should be carried forward as a reserve fund and this was agreed to. The Secretary stated that the consumption of gas was on the increase and to meet the requirements it would be necessary to have a new gas holder. It was decided that a holder be purchased to hold 6000 cubic feet of gas at a cost of £220. To defray the expense of this it was agreed that preference shares at 4 per cent be issued. Most of the shares were taken up in the room.

Newcastle to Biggleswade by Boat

During my September talk I included the following quote from the book by Mr Tony Richardson on the history of his family in Potton and Biggleswade:- 'Charles and Sarah Jane Richardson raised seven children in Wallsend on Tyneside. The family made many visits to Biggleswade. (To visit their relatives in the early part of this century.) The journeys south were made by ship which was cheaper than rail travel. The voyage to London cost 10/- single with a meal included and the rail trip from there to Biggleswade was a further 4/-. This compared with £1 single by rail from Newcastle to Biggleswade.' This surprised many at the meeting. I sent a copy of the tape of the meeting to Mr Richardson who was kind enough to send a copy of an extract from 'A Newcastle Boyhood, 1898-1914' by Basil Peacock (1986) which provides more detail on the journey by sea to London.

Money never being plentiful in our family it was arranged that father would travel by train and Alec and I by ship, which was very much cheaper, especially by steerage class. Ships of the Tyne and Tees made regular passages between Newcastle and London, the outward and inward runs each occupying about 22 hours. Being counted as an infant, my return fare was 5/-, and I think my brother paid £1 for his. We were booked to sail in a well known very old ship the SS Highlander, far past its best.

The ship cast off her mooring ropes and passed close by the famous liner, SS Mauretania, which had been recently launched from a Wallsend shipyard, and was being fitted out. Soon a greasy steward, beating a frying pan, called the steerage passengers to our evening meal. I can remember that meal to this day, as it was my first experience of rough eating. It consisted of stewed meat, potatoes, and cabbage swimming in greasy gravy, plus bread and margarine and mugs of tea. The passengers, all rough looking types, ate with relish, and waited, expecting pudding to follow; and when it did not arrive, shouted for the next course. The steward replied "Gentlemen, the next course is the reckoning - one shilling and threepence each and ninepence for the boy." There was some

grumbling, but the passengers eventually paid up, as he stood in the hatchway and would not allow them on deck till they did.

Soon, owing to the sea air, I was feeling sleepy, so Alec tucked me up with blankets on my bunk and I slept but not for long. I was awakened by feeling my bunk sinking down from me, then lifting me upwards. The steward, grinning, was distributing large washing up bowls to all the bunks, as the ship was pitching and rolling with a sickening motion, intensified at its stern. I immediately threw up, loosing my dinner, and lay in some misery and some fear as the waves crashed against the ship's plates an inch or two above my head.

Breakfast consisted of finnan haddock boiled in water, not in milk as we had at home, and I could not touch it, but was grateful for a mug of hot, strong sweet tea. No other meal was offered, and when we entered London River, I forgot my seasickness and munched sandwiches and a piece of bacon and egg pie which Mother had provided for the voyage.

I looked ahead with trepidation to our return voyage, fearing more seasickness, but the weather was fine, the sea calm, and we had some amusing passengers. One has an accordion and another a fiddle and both played the instruments well. This was followed by a conjuror, then a tenor soloist and a comedian. The party developed into a drinking bout and I was sent to bed!

The steerage passengers were segregated on a small part of the ship's deck so I could not explore the rest of the ship, and became bored and a little homesick, which lead me to inscribing my first unsolicited piece of writing on a slip paper - 'At sea on the SS Stephen Furness - bored to death; yours truly Basil Peacock.' I placed the paper in an empty lemonade bottle, corked it and threw it into the North Sea. When we reached home Mother welcomed us as though we had voyaged to the ends of the earth and back.

I am grateful to Mr Richardson for providing us with this account. I wonder if our members can provide us with any memorable journey accounts for future newsletters?

Peter Ibbett

On the Trail of the Cycling Club

Last year, whilst sorting through some odds and ends, PHS member Mick Ibbett came across some enamelled badges bearing the name 'Potton C C'. At the time nobody could shed any light on either badge or club, but whilst searching through some old newspaper cuttings in the archives, I came across the following :-



15th March 1898

A meeting was held in the Engine House on Thursday week to consider the advisability of forming a cycling club. There were about 25 persons present, Mr. C. J. Hercock in the chair. It was resolved to form a cycling club for the town and Mr. H. Tysoe was elected secretary, Mr. E. Storr captain, Mr. L. Pope sub-captain, Mr. O. Judge bugler, and the following the committee, Messrs. W.J. Felts, W.E. Peckover, Thos. Judge, W. Adams, A. Stapley and W. Gray. It was decided to ask Mr. J. Poole Wagstaff to become president, and the secretary was instructed to write to several gentlemen asking them to become vice-presidents. At present 18 gentlemen and 10 ladies have given in their names as members.

15th April 1898

CYCLING. The members of this club met for the first time on the 7th instant for a run but as this was the day before Good Friday the muster was not very large. The start was from the Engine House at 5 o'clock and the company returned home two hours later.

Mary Leigh

Notice Board

South Beds Coach Trip

Arrangements are now well under way for this year's coach trip, which will reveal to the lucky participants the hidden secrets of South Bedfordshire, thus completing a tour which began in 1995 with the middle section of the county and last year uncovered the mysteries of the North. The cost of a seat will be between £10 and £12, to include lunch and afternoon tea.

Tickets will be on sale at the April and subsequent meetings or thereafter by contacting Peter Ibbett on 01480 812731.

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Cockayne Hatley Fete

There will be another chance to see the Potton Car at Cockayne Hatley Fete, to be held at the Hall on Sunday 22nd June from 12 noon till 4pm.

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Newsletter no 23

Articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue is 1st September 1997. Please pass items to Mary Leigh.