

Dotton History Society



Newsletter Number 25 Autumn 1998

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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
	Ken Lawson
Newsletter Editors	Mr & Mrs 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
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.

Society News

At our **April** meeting we featured the Clock House which lies at the heart of the town. Peter Ibbett traced the history of this central area, with its markets and fairs bustling around the old Shambles, predecessor to the current building. Our new booklet, all about the Clock House, was launched at the bargain price of only £1. If you missed out on the night, copies are still available from Tysoe's Hardware Store or at any Society meeting.

For the first time in 21 years of meetings, we concentrated on sport in **May** and discovered that past inhabitants of Potton have had a wide and varied interest in sporting activities. This diversity of interest has been kept up right through to the present day, when the spectrum reaches from the gentle pace of the bowling green to the exertions of the trampoline. Our archives hold a wealth of fascinating information on this topic although research for the talk showed that much work needs to be done to bring together and index all the relevant documents.

The **June** meeting featured insights into the history of education in Potton. Patricia Yates opened the evening with details of the ways in which Potton Consolidated Charities, built up over hundreds of years by donations from local residents, have helped the poor of the town to receive an education. Eric Jakes, a present day Trustee of the Charities, gave information on the financial help that is still being received today by local students and organisations. Peter Ibbett rounded off the evening with items from the archives, including a school poem written by Nellie Richardson, part of which I have reproduced later in this newsletter.

This year's outdoor meeting took place in **July**, when we organised guided walks based on the newly published walk leaflets. Thankfully we were blessed with fine weather for the occasion so it was quite a large group of 'newcomers' who followed Peter Ibbett for the full historical tour whilst two smaller groups of 'old-timers' meandered in different directions to rekindle past memories and assess changes that are in progress. All met up again for refreshments and to bring together the evenings discoveries.

In **August** it was time to resume the thread of the streets of Potton and discover whose feet have walked upon them through the centuries. By delving into the archives once again, Peter Ibbett was able to find information and names from as early as the 10th century, following right through to the modern day. The evening was rounded off with a report from Rev. Wyn Beynon, Vicar of St Mary's, on a remembrance service held recently at Cockayne Hatley for friends and family of the airmen killed in a crash near Potton Wood in 1945. The full story of the crash was published in our Newsletter No.18.

The ever fascinating story of the mystery of Potton Manor was brought up to date in **September**, when we were delighted to welcome Trevor Ball back into our midst. Although the first edition of Trevor's book was completed in 1989, his research has never come to an end and thus a constant trickle of new information has been added to the story. Even since his update for the second edition, which was published last year, there have been more snippets to add to the file, so watch this space and we will keep you posted.

---ooOoo---

This year has seen a great deal of activity on the publishing front, both in the raising of funds and in negotiations with the printers. Finally our long held dream of reproducing the two early volumes of Pictures of Potton has come true and in early August we were able to hold a book promotion in the Market Square for both these and the second edition of the 'Manor' book. Despite a last minute hitch, when a printers error meant that all the copies of 'Early Photographs' had to be returned to the printer the day before the event, the level of sales exceeded our expectations to prove that the effort was all worthwhile.

The cemetery survey is moving forward at a great pace, with the expectation that it will be completed next year. Ken Lawson has now taken over as co-ordinator for this project so anyone wishing to be involved in the survey should contact him on 01767 261209. The work is quite straightforward, recording the messages on the headstones, measuring up, and in some cases taking photographs.

Ken tells me he has met many old friends whilst carry out this survey and revived many memories. He has been able to come to an arrangement with the caretaker so that he will be notified when any new stones are erected or additional wording added to existing stones. This means of course that this is one project which will truly be a never-ending story!

Having observed, over the months, that many of our speakers were having great difficulty referring to their notes during their talks, it was felt that some sort of lectern would be a most useful item. Our thoughts immediately turned to Keith Lawrence, who has taken on several unusual projects for the Society in the past. He was delighted to have his skills put to the test once again and soon came up with a design that met with our approval. If you wish to see the finished result, just come along to one of our evening meetings. I'm sure a purpose built article of this quality would have cost a small fortune if we had gone to any other craftsman, if indeed we could have found anyone to take on the task. See Keith's report later in the newsletter on the varied materials he used.

After much soul searching, the Society's Secretary, Mary Leigh, has taken the decision to resign from her post, and from the committee, with effect from November 1998, owing to increased work and family commitments and a Victorian house which still requires a great deal of renovation. Mary will have completed nine years in the post of Secretary and 11 years on the committee. She will continue as Newsletter Editor for the time being, with assistance from Norman Parry.

Committee member Jack Hutchinson is also standing down at the AGM owing to ill health. His vast wealth of local knowledge will be sorely missed at future meetings.

Archive news

During the last six months numerous improvements have been made to the storage facilities in our archive rooms, the most significant being the installation of overhead shelving, to make full use of the lofty ceilings of the rooms. The overall outcome of this is that the third room is no longer an unkempt dumping ground. Instead we now have a further clean and tidy archive area, large enough to hold an enormous map chest which has been donated and is ideal for storage of our large collection of posters, which date back over a period of a hundred years.

The photographic collection has now been filed in the new cabinet and labelled up for easy access and handling. The cross referencing for the re-classification of the collection has been completed, thanks to the dedication of Jean McLennan, who has spent untold hours on this lengthy and very necessary task. As a result of all these improvements, selecting photographs for our recent exhibition at The Potton Show was a much simpler task. Once the topics had been settled upon it was a very simple matter to find the appropriate books of photographs, and select from them the material we wanted. Returning the sheets after use was swift and easy, unlike the magical mystery tour of the past.

With the photographs finally settled we have at last begun on the most daunting task of all, the reorganising of the document files. Our series of talks on Potton this year has demonstrated the wealth of material that is hidden away in the files, but it takes the skills of a genius (or Peter Ibbett) to find the way through the maze to the information required. Much material remains in the filing tray because no-one is quite sure where to put it or if it will ever be seen again. The first moves have already been made, so listen out for details of our archive evenings if you would like to help.

Lectern and Stand for the Potton History Society 1998

Old and new materials were used, appropriately?

After the basic design was approved by the society committee and final overall dimensions decided upon, a start was made on its two part construction, the desk and the stand, for use on table top or as a combined unit.

The main frame and panelling was constructed using new pine timber and tongue and grooved wainscot panelling. The frame was made with mortise and tenon joints glued, pinned and screwed together for rigidity, the panels cut and glued then pinned into the frames. The desk surface was cut from a plywood backing from an old mirror. This also provided sufficient material for the stand shelf. The sides and bottom framing boards for the desk surface were cut from an old cupboard solid wooden shelf. The desk top fascia board was produced from a wooden plank from an old shed door. These surround boards were cut and grooved to provide a captive frame for the desk surface. The base of the desk top and stand was made from hardwood timber cut from an old solid wood table top.

A curved metal light screen with ventilation slots was made from a sheet metal lid acquired from Biggleswade Tidy Tip and secured with hinges to allow for easy access to change the tube light, the hinges were from an old wardrobe door. To keep the cover shut I used two captive 2BA nuts riveted to two brass right angle plates, secured flush with the top edge of the desk side frames to accept two round headed securing screws for the light cover. I cut larger slots in these to accept the width of a 2p coin for convenience. The captive nuts are of aircraft quality and were acquired from De Havillands, Hatfield, c1953 when I was employed as a detail fitter on the production of the Comet Airliner. Sadly an unforeseen fault forced the Comet from service. However, even today the RAF still use a Comet hybrid on search and rescue missions - they are now known as Nimrods! A recent example was reported in the Daily Papers on March 29th 1998 and stated that

Tracy Edwards and her crew in their catamaran yacht Royal and Sun Alliance, had their mast shattered in a storm in the Southern Pacific Ocean and a Nimrod of the RAF was used to locate them and drop essential supplies. The light fittings installed are new stock.

The Title plate bracket slots were secured to the fascia board, these were made from a piece of plywood from an old cupboard. This was painted with blackboard paint supplied by Mr Ken Lawson. The PHS Logo panel was made from the plywood lid of a cardboard barrel container for plastic pellets used in injection moulding machines for the production of bodies for electrical contacts used in the electronic industry. These were made by Flexicon's of Hitchin Street, Biggleswade, situated in the old Empire Cinema - sad to say that both ventures have now disappeared. I drew and painted the logo with Humbrol Enamel modelling paint from my own stock. After the desk top and stand were wood dyed and varnished with new stock paint I then fitted the logo panel in its final position.

The feet pads I cut from an old lathe leather pulley belt acquired from Smart and Browns, Biggleswade. (Sadly another manufacturer assigned to the past) The bolts, wing nuts and other odds and ends came from my 'Bassett's Allsorts selection box!'

Because I have no machine tools the Lectern was produced using all hand tools, one of which was a saw that belonged to my Dad and which he used on the renovations to John Bunyan's Moot Hall at Elstow Beds (about the time of the Festival of Britain Year). One final touch was to cut a piece of lino to fit inside the desk surface and where, it can be said, the feet of the past have walked!

So concluded the construction of a Lectern and Stand, well suited: I hope, in its old and new materials for the Potton History Society. I must say I was delighted that I was asked to make it for them. It was a challenge that I enjoyed and I hope it will provide many years of useful service.

K.G Lawrence

Cockayne Hatley

Extract from the diary of J.M. Neale, 12 Dec. 1839 (Lambeth Palace Library: Ms. 3107 ff. 81-82d)

...It was getting dark, but we pushed on to Hatley Cockayne where we put up our horses at a farm, there being no inn. The church is magnificent beyond description. At the time the present Rector came it was almost ruined, and had hardly a beautiful feature belonging to it. The outside is now in the most perfect repair. The drain that should never be omitted runs round the walls, and there is an iron fence, separating off a paved portion before the West End, where is the entrance. You enter by folding doors adorned in the most exquisite carving. They came from some Dutch church; all the additions were procured at or near Antwerp. The coup d'oil is very striking. The pulpit is a most elaborate piece of carving of the date of 1559. It has the 4 Evangelists exquisitely sculptured with the symbols. This stands at the West end of the North. The Clerk's desk is a little behind it, and also very beautiful. The reading stool is by the Altar and is supported by a figure of St. Andrew.

The C (Chancel) is panelled with the most gorgeous carving. Each side is divided into 8 niches, and in each side stands a Saint, about half the size of life with his name and legend. Between these are the figures of Cherubim etc. The Saint nearest the Altar on the South side is St. Thomas Archbishop and Martyr. There are also S. Posper, S. Possidonius, S. Gregory, S. Antony, S. Nicholas, S. Bernard occupies the station on the North that S. Thomas does on the South side. There are also S. Ivo, S. Silvester and others.

The East window is modern, both as to the stone work and the glass. The latter is however excellent, containing the history of the Saviour's life. The Crucifixion of course occupying the prominent station in the centre. Under this window is a series of pannelling, in which are inserted most beautifully illuminated in Lombardic characters, the Belief, Commandments, and Lord's Prayer. Behind these, and immediately above the Altar, the text is illuminated "The

Law was given by Moses" on one side, then in the centre an illuminated Chalice, and on the other "but grave & truth came by Jesus Christ".

The North Window in the Chancel is, as is every Window in the Church, filled with stained glass, the arms of the Cockaynes fill the side lights, the South window is similar, except that it has the Cust Arms. There is not a pew in the Nave. It is filled with Cathedral stalls having beautiful poppy-heads.

The East Window of the North Aisle has nine Saxon Saints, the lowest are S. Edward the Confessor, S. Sebert & S. Oswald. All this glass is ancient. The front was a plan 8L (octagonal). It is now panelled into most beautiful P (perpendicular). The basin is an ancient (one word illegible) piece of china, containing the History of Joseph and his brethren, though this is incorrect. In the Nave are 3 sets of brasses, containing 2, 3 and 3 figures respectively. These all commemorate the Cockaynes, but very unfortunately enamelled, I could not take them. In the South aisle is an Elizabethan monument to Sir Patrick Hume. On the North West pier of the Nave is an exquisite modern EE (Early English) niche.

We were forced to see this all by candle light and I could have cried with joy to see so much of the feeling of former times (one word illegible) amongst us. Cust was gone to Bedford, or we should have called. As it was, we left our names. I was amused with the naivety of the clerk's reply to my question whether there were any Dissenters? Oh no, Sir, Mr. Cust doesn't like that there should be any. I wish I could do something like justice to this glorious Church. We remounted our horses and rode through Hatley Cockayne wood. I never saw such a road. Oceans of mud up to the horses' knees, branches projecting across the road, twilight pitfalls and gates tended to make our passage neither pleasant nor safe. We were an hour getting to Hatley St. George which is little more than a mile and a half and our horses were dreadfully fagged. Indeed I think we should never have reached our destination at all, had not the moon fortunately, I might also say providentially, come out. We put up at the George...

A Bit of Military History.

On the 10th of August 1815 John Sabey made his will, in which he described himself as "late a Serjeant in his Majesties fourteenth Regiment of Foot and of the first Battalion of such regiment". Sabey left everything that he possessed to his friend Joseph Sharman a yeoman of Potton whom he also appointed executor of the will. Included in the bequest was ... "the prize money I may have or be intitled unto arising from the capture of the Isle of France or of Java in the East Indies or elsewhere and also all other prize money to which I am or may become intitled to". Sabey was able to sign his will which was produced in the office of William Chapman, a solicitor who signed as a witness. Others who signed were Richard Whittingham the Vicar, John Page the Constable and John Rogers, a cooper, all of Potton.

After Sabey's death Thomas Hagger produced a valuation of his property. Only three items are recorded :-

Household goods and furniture	£5	5s	0d	
Wearing Apparel	3	13	6	
Cash in the house	40	0	0	
	£48	18s	6d	(£48.93p)

In today's money that £40 would probably be worth about £3500. Hagger's valuation was produced on the 20th November and in it he stated that Sabey had died on 12th which is the same day given in the parish register for his burial. Either Hagger had his dates wrong or Sabey was buried with undue haste. As Sabey was only 41 years of age when he died, he could possibly have been the victim of a tropical disease caught during his service overseas.

In those days officers and men of the British Army received prize money, as the prospect of financial reward at the end of a campaign was both a recruitment attraction and a disincentive against looting. Going by his age Sabey probably joined the 14th after its return from the West Indies in 1791. On the renewal of the war against Napoleon two further battalions were raised, each one being engaged in different campaigns.

The 1st was in Flanders at Earners in 1793 and at Tournai in 1794, it returned to England via Bremen then sailed to the West Indies where it served in St. Lucia, Porto Rico, Trinidad and elsewhere before returning home in 1803. It was in the Hanover Expedition of 1805 and then went to India in 1807 and was soon afterwards sent against the Danish settlement of Tranquebar on the east coast of Madras. It was at the capture of Mauritius in 1810, detachments served in the capture of Bataan and the battalion took part in the conquest of Java in 1811 and was stationed on that island for some time afterwards. With others it stormed the stronghold of the Sultan of Mataram in the interior of Java in June 1812 and in the following year was employed against the piratical State of Sambas on the west coast of Borneo.

It must have been about this time that Sabey returned home, either having completed his service or for medical reasons because the 1st Battalion moved to the Bengal frontier during the war in Nepal and did not return home until 1831.

It is a pity that Sabey did not live long enough to enjoy his retirement and to look back on what must have been an interesting if hard twenty years of his life spent travelling and in action.

I am grateful to Iain Kerr of Windsor for the information on the movements of the 14th Regiment in this period.

N.P.

School Visitors

When I was in school at Potton from the age of 5 to 7 in 1936 to 1937 I can remember various visitors coming into classes during this time. A dreaded visitor was the school nurse or 'nit nurse' as she was sometimes called. All pupils heads were inspected and if infection was discovered the nurse would visit the pupils home and preventative measures would have to be taken by the whole family. I believe that school nurses still have this task today. Nurse also gave vaccinations, one always hoped they came to school when a not particularly favourite lesson was due.

A man who called periodically was the School Attendance Officer. I can remember him inspecting the class attendance register and noting in his book those pupils who were not at school without a valid reason. He also visited their homes.

School Governors appeared from time to time to watch teacher and pupils conducting themselves in their daily tasks. Pupils were usually warned in advance of their visit and were expected to be on their best behaviour.

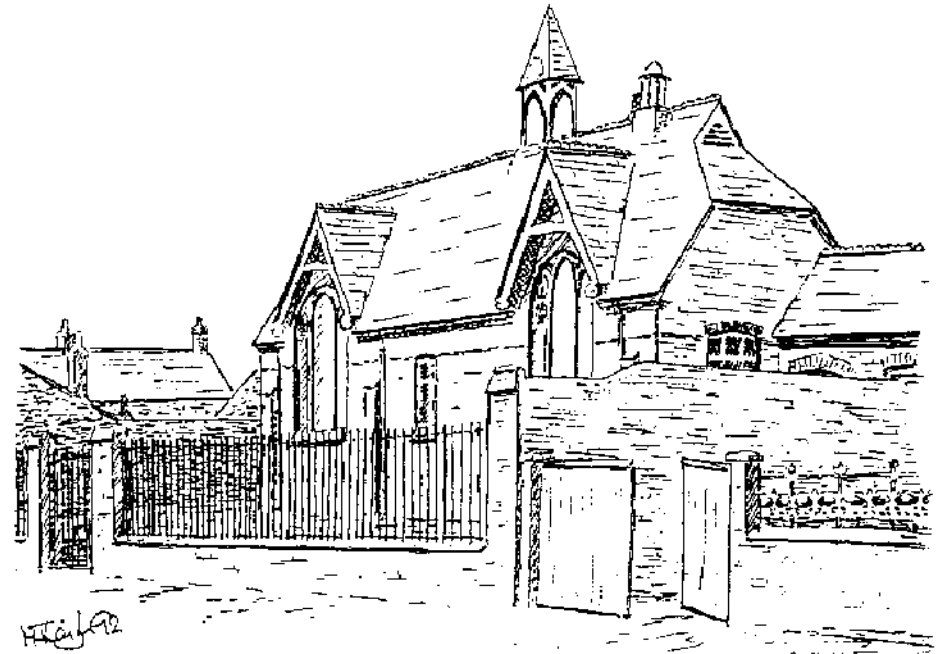
Occasionally a policeman visited. Resplendant in neatly groomed uniform he spoke about road safety and inspected pupils bicycles to see if they were faulty and required maintenance.

As I got older and moved with my parents to Essex another visitor came to my school, the dentist. At the conclusion of his examination if anything needed to be done a pink or blue form was given to the pupil to take home to get parental approval for the dental work to be carried out. A blue form meant fillings and a pink one meant extractions, these operations to be carried out at a dental surgery at a later date. Neither a pleasant experience for a young child. Why did I always get a pink form to take home! Unlucky for some, and it had to be me.

Most of these visits were for our own good health although this was not always appreciated by pupils so young.

Roy Rodwell

The thing that strikes me most is how little things had changed when my children were at infant school nearly 50 years later - Ed.



Potton Lower School - 1876 to 1982

A delightful picture of school life is portrayed in a poem written by Nellie Richardson (nee Warren) in 1910. In the verse shown below we learn of another regular school visitor from a much earlier period. Nellie was still living in Potton until she died at the age of 92 years on March 4th, 1997.

*We loved our teachers, and how they worked,
We sang painted, sums, read and verse,
And then on Tuesday in the School Yard,
Our drill man came and his face was hard,
To work us all in that yard,
We jumped and turned arms and legs, up and down,
And in and out, in an hour he had worn us out.*

Ed.

The Moving Population

It's a small world.

My daughter Barbara who now lives in Coventry has been researching the family history of her husband Ian who is a Birmingham man. She found that one of his ancestors, named Minett had arrived in Birmingham from Gloucestershire via Herefordshire which is where the last century Parrys appear. In the 1851 census for Ross-on-Wye there was a George Minett a watchmaker, silversmith and jeweller, a master employing one "lad". The lad was an apprentice aged 19, Henry Keeling born in Potton. Henry was first apprenticed to Richard Orpwood of Cambridge in 1847 and then again to George Minett in 1850.

Attempts to find out why he was apprenticed twice have been unsuccessful. The book for the period 1840 to 1869 of John Snitch's Charity which was the one covering payments to apprentice masters appears to have been mislaid. This book was available when Patricia and Ralph Yates produced Research Report No.3 on Potton Consolidated Charities in 1985 but the Charities no longer have it. It is said to have been deposited in the County Record Office but they apparently have nothing on Potton apprentices after 1837. It would have been interesting to have found the reasons for the second apprenticeship and to know how the Potton Charities were aware of a vacancy in Herefordshire.

N.P.

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Visitors from South Africa.

In early May, Lesley Mayne, the Clerk to Potton Town Council received a letter from Vic Bumberry of Johannesburg, South Africa requesting information about Potton where his ancestors had lived in the last century. Vic and his wife were due to visit England later in that month and it was arranged that Anne Barker, who has family connections to the Bumberrys, and I would arrange to be available on the day that they made a brief stop in Potton on their way to Norfolk.

We were able to provide them with information from parish registers and from documents in the County Record Office, including copies of two 19th century wills. As I had a week or so notice of the visit I was able to use the Society's collection of negatives to produce copies of photographs of the Bricklayer's Arms and the now demolished properties in Newtown formerly Sharmans and the adjacent row of cottages known as Bumberry's Row. Information from the census documents showed that the Sharman house was the home of the last of the Bumberrys to have lived in Potton. Other Society records shows that the houses had been built by a Thomas Seamer, the brother-in-law of Thomas Bumberry who was the owner of the land on which they were built.

It is always pleasing to meet people from abroad who have Potton connections, to be able to provide them with a record of a bit of Potton's history and to know that the information has found a home in a far corner of the world.

N.P.

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The Complete English Traveller by Nathaniel Spencer 1771

'Potton, the first market town we visited in Bedfordshire is pleasantly situated near the borders of Cambridgeshire, and is reckoned one of the most considerable towns next to Bedford in this county. It is chiefly inhabited by carcass butchers, who send vast quantities of veal to the London Markets. At present the town is populous but does not contain any buildings worthy of the travellers notice. The weekly market is on Saturday where vast quantities of corn with a great number of cattle and fowls are sold; and they have four annual fairs, viz. on the third Tuesday in January for horses, Tuesday before Easter, the first Tuesday in July and the Tuesday before the 29th October for all sorts of cattle, being distant from London 49 miles.

The 10th Bedfordshire Local History Conference

Cockayne Hatley provided an ideal venue for the Annual gathering of Bedfordshire Local Historians. Over 40 delegates from all over the county assembled in the main room of Hatley Hall to receive a welcome from our chairman, George Howe. Peter Ibbett introduced the theme of the conference which was the 'Millennium Challenge'. He suggested that the next two years would be an ideal opportunity to not only raise more interest in Local History but also to involve more in active involvement.

Delegates from the participating groups provided a series of small reports on the current developments and plans in their area. The delegates then went out to explore Cockayne Hatley. They were able to visit the Church and the village where two of the gardens were opened for them. They were also able to explore the site of the Hall itself and look at the 'Potton car' which was on display.

An excellent lunch was provided by the very efficient Hatley Church fund-raising organisation. The afternoon session provided two contributions illustrating some of the problems of publishing Local History. The final contribution came from Tony Crossley who provided a presentation illustrating some of his research into the history of Cockayne Hatley.

Local History groups in the county are in a generally healthy state and can face the Millennium with confidence. Our Society again showed that it can organise a successful county conference and play its part in helping to keep Local History in Bedfordshire in a healthy state. Particular thanks should go to Tony and Gloria Crossley for their contributions to the success of the day.

Peter Ibbett

Notice Board

Forthcoming Programme

- Nov 26th
7.30pm followed by AGM
Potton Celebrates
- Dec 10th
Anniversary Quiz
- Jan 29th
The 1851 Great Exhibition Mr V Ibbett
- Feb 25th
The Extinction of the Potton Iguanodon Mr B O'Connor

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Society Secretary

A new secretary will be needed from November 1998. One nomination has been received, are there any more?
There is also a vacancy for a general committee member.

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Newsletter no 26

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome. Please pass items to Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue will be 1st March 1999.