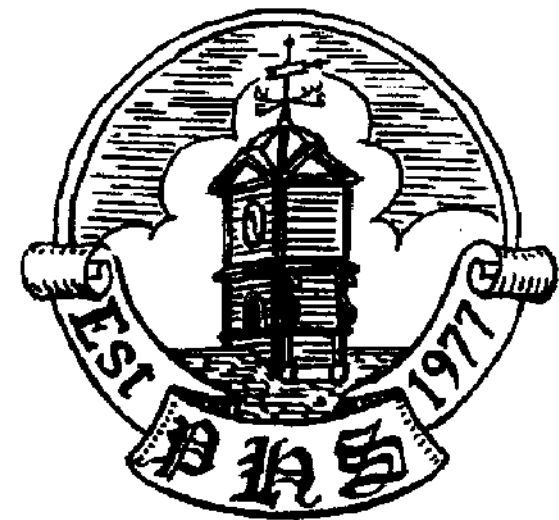


Potton History Society



Newsletter Number 28 Spring 2000

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Acknowledgements:-

Thanks to Keith Lawrence for the illustration on page 15.

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

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

Lindsay's Bakery,
Tysoc's Hardware Store,
Harper's Barber Shop.

Society News

Society Meetings.

The Royal Mail.

The September meeting of the Society featured a talk on the History of the Royal Mail by Mr Neil Alston from Biggleswade. The origins of the service go back into mediaeval times when special horsemen were organised to deliver the King's mail. It was Oliver Cromwell who set up the Post Office with a monopoly on carrying the mail. A gradual evolution of the service extended it within the reach of a wider population with the Penny Post Act of 1765. A wide range of charges and practice led to Rowland Hill introducing the country-wide penny post and the famous 'Penny Black' stamp in 1840. The Post Office has adapted to many changes and faces the e-mail future still as the world's premier postal service.

Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Churches.

The October meeting featured a talk by the Chairman of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Mr Leppar explained how his trust was able to contribute over £10,000 a year towards the restoration of local church buildings by the activities of its members. Local churches reflect the local building materials which may not be resistant to the effects of time and pollution. Bedfordshire has many examples of fine work including some nationally important early English work. Restoration work has enabled modern craftsmen to compare their skills with the best of their ancestors. The talk was illustrated with many excellent slides. Photographs and material connected with both Potton and Cockayne Hatley churches was also on display.

Successful AGM.

A well attended meeting heard Chairman, George Howe report that 1999 had been another successful year with a continued high level of activity and membership. A full programme of meetings was in place for the coming millennium year. Tony Crossley had resigned from the committee but would continue to take an active part in the Society activities including work on the Potton Car.

After the AGM Mrs Vesey spoke about the history and origins of Nursery Rhymes. These are not all as innocent or as simple as they appear!. Some have pre-Christian origins while others came about as a means of passing comment upon the deeds of a particular King or Queen without making a direct reference. Others have connections with battles, beliefs, superstitions and various aspects of everyday life. Mrs Vesey revealed the surprising nature of many of our common nursery rhymes in a captivating manner.

Potton in 1899.

The Society's December meeting looked back 100 years to Potton of 1899. An adaptation from Bedfordshire Times articles of the period can be seen on page 10 of this newsletter and gives a wonderful flavour of the town before the modern era.

Fairs in East Bedfordshire

The new year began with a visit from an old friend. Ken Page from Biggleswade had produced a set of slides to illustrate his research into local fairs and the families who run them and we were lucky enough to be the first to view them. Potton is known to have held up to four regular annual fairs during most of the last millennium and although the main purpose of these was for the trading of goods and services, the business of the day was always accompanied by many and varied forms of entertainment. Sadly these annual trade fairs no longer take place but the entertainment has survived and along with it the tradition of meeting at certain dates in the year at each town. Ken's fully illustrated book on the history of the Harris family of showmen is still available from the Bookworms book shop in Biggleswade, price £20

In the Wake of Captain Cook

In February Mr Val Ibbett made a welcome return to give a talk focused on the modern re-enactment of events relating to the 18th century explorations of the famous sea captain. As part of the Australian bi-centenary celebrations a replica of Cook's ship the Endeavour had been built and Mr Ibbett was able to join as a supernumerary crew member at Plymouth and to sail as far as Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the Canary Isles. His description of life on board gave members an insight into a way of life not normally experienced by people of land-locked Bedfordshire.

Ivel Valley Countryside Project.

A leaflet describing a 5.3 mile/8.5km walk between Potton, Sutton and Deepdale has been produced by the Ivel Valley Countryside Project and is available (price 50p) from the Tourist Information Centres and the Ivel Valley Countryside Project Office at Biggleswade library. Although our Society co-operated in providing information based partly on our own Town Walk and local knowledge a few errors have crept into the final version. These concern the area used for coprolite production which has been located to the east of Sutton Mill Road instead of to the west and incorrect information concerning the Bedford to Cambridge railway where names and dates have been confused with the earlier Potton to Sandy line. Even with these errors the walk looks like a welcome addition to the amenities of the area and one hopes that with a start and finish point in the Brook End car park visitors will take advantage of the facilities offered by the Town.

Mr Smith the Blacksmith.

In Newsletter No.18 Frank Sells reminisced about his boyhood holidays which he spent in Potton with his grandfather who had a small blacksmith's shop in Blackbird Street and with his uncle Ernie who took over the Brook End Forge. Photographs taken by the Cambridge Evening News of Ernie Smith at work in the Forge are in our Archives.

Since the appearance of this piece in the newsletter Frank has died and the task of researching the family history has been taken up by his daughter, Mrs Mary Barratt of Southgate in London. In correspondence with Peter Ibbet, Mrs Barratt has said that she is hoping to visit Potton to add to her research and she has provided three photographs for our Archives. Two of these are of blacksmiths at work, believed to be Ernest Smith and his father Joseph Thomas Smith. The location is probably the Blackbird Street premises where Joseph had his business in a stable in the yard belonging to Mr Abbot, a coal merchant.

If anyone has any memories or other information about the Smiths and their businesses would they please contact Peter who will pass it on to Mrs Barratt.

Potton Weather.

One of our members has recently deposited in the archives a table showing monthly figures of maximum and minimum temperatures and rainfall for the period from January 1993 to December 1999. This reminded our Programme Secretary that he had kept notebook records of weather conditions in his younger days. If anyone else has stored away information of a similar nature it would be appreciated if they could add a copy to this weather file which will give us an idea as to whether (pun not intentional) global warming is a figment of a collective media imagination or is in fact happening.

Welcome to our new members.

Mr J.M.C.Andrews Mrs M.J.Andrews Mrs M. Lavender
Mrs V.Thompson Mrs Proctor

Forthcoming Programme.

May.25 th	The Fenland Story	Mr E. Hall.
Jun.22 nd	Visit to RSPB at Sandy Lodge. *NB* no meeting in the Community Centre this month	
Jul.1 st	The Millennium Show.	See Notice Board.
Jul.27 th	History of the Ordnance Survey	Mr E. Lund
Aug.24 th	History of Sutton.	Local contributors
Sep.28 th	The Victorian Ironmonger in Potton	Mr P. Ibbett
Oct.26 th	200 years of Potton Baptists	Rev. S. Evers
Nov.23 rd	Mail Boxes *NB* 7.30 start for the AGM	Mr N. Alston
Dec.7 th	20 th Century Potton - A Look Back	

Parish Registers-Cambridgeshire.

A recent acquisition has been microfiche copies of the transcripts of the early parish registers of Hatley St. George, East Hatley and Gamlingay. It was felt that these would be of use because of the family connections between Potton and these parishes.

The Cambridgeshire transcripts do not have a cross reference to parishes of origin as those in Bedfordshire do so it is necessary to search through for the lines which relate to Potton people but as most of these are in the marriages section it is not too laborious a task.

The Hatley St George records run mainly from 1591 to 1812, but with marriages continuing to 1837 when civil registration started and with 2 baptisms in 1580. Banns of marriage are also included from their start in 1754 to 1812. An interesting addition is a list of paupers from the year 1796. It is known that poor harvests in the 1790s had resulted in near famine conditions in many rural areas and there are records of attempts by local clergy and magistrates to relieve poverty by distribution of bread and other necessities. The list in Hatley St. George contains the names of 31 adults and states that they had 35 children between them. A total of 66 paupers must have represented a high percentage of the population of a village which was never very large.

East Hatley has a similar range of register records, baptisms 1585 to 1812, burials 1595 to 1812, marriages 1590 to 1837 and banns 1754 to 1812.

Gamlingay burial records start in 1595 and continue to 1851, baptism and marriage lists are from 1602 to 1851 and as with the other parishes banns start in 1754 but here they continue to 1851. The record also includes a list of 53 burials in the Meeting House yard in the years between 1718 and 1762 and a list of 43 baptisms of children of dissenters between 1698 and 1784.

A few pre-1602 entries have survived, mainly dealing with events concerning incumbents of the parish, their relatives and strangers. Two interesting items amongst these early records are the statements that there were 81 persons buried in 1546 and 80 in 1582. These must have been abnormal occurrences to have been so recorded. The annual average number of burials in the early 1600s in Gamlingay was 13 and as the population was unlikely to have been more than 1000 the 1546 and 1582 figures must represent epidemics of catastrophic proportions. Of the other local parishes which have records as early as these, Sutton does not show any such unusually high figures, whilst Dunton, where the registers date from 1558 has no record of any burials in 1582 and 1583. This could perhaps mean that a similar situation to that in Gamlingay existed and that no-one was available to keep a record. Eyeworth appears to have a high death rate in 1546 and gaps around the 1580s but small parishes are notoriously unreliable in their figures. One can speculate about influenza epidemics or outbreaks of plague but the real reason or reasons will probably never be known.

Other notable entries include the year 1777 when, in the February to July period 24 people are recorded as having died from smallpox and 1849 when in the last week of September, 11 people were buried having died of Asiatic Cholera. On 5 November 1788 William Taylor, the steward to the Hon. General Parker of Woodbury Hall was buried, it was said that his death was by a fall from his horse coming home from Potton Market.

Also added to the Society's collection of pre-1812 parish register microfiche are those for the Bedfordshire parishes of Cople, Eaton Socon, Everton, Sandy, Wilden and Willington.

The Society's portable microfiche viewer is available for use in the Archive Rooms or on loan to members wishing to view any of these records.

1901 Census Project.

The last Newsletter gave some information on the PRO proposals to make the 1901 census available. Further details of these have now emerged with the issuing of a contract to the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) who will carry out the work through a network of sub-contractors which includes the Enterprise and Supply Services (ESS). DERA is an umbrella organisation of scientific civil servants employed (or underemployed) by the Ministry of Defence and ESS is an agency of the Prison Service.

The aim of the PRO appears to be to make the census available in electronic format which in effect means that access will be through the internet either by individuals who have their own computers or through public libraries. At present it seems that there will be free access (apart from phone charges) to a name index only, charges of around 50p per entry transcript or for an enhanced search and around 80p per image of a complete page of names with a £5 minimum charge. Reduced rates will be available to heavy users of the system and organisations such as Family History Societies will be able to negotiate terms with the PRO and then charge their users whatever rate they think fit.

The facility to purchase photocopies of the original Enumerators Books will no longer be available. The PRO states that it will be providing access at a PRO site to the census on fiche and that Record Offices and main libraries will be able to purchase copies of fiche for their own area. Whether organisations such as local history societies will be included has not yet been clarified.

As can be imagined the proposals have created a lot of concern amongst historians and genealogists so much so that the PRO have invited representatives to discuss their concerns but with the contract already in place it seems unlikely that anything more than cosmetic alterations will take place.

The concerns can be expressed under three headings, the first is in the ability of organisations such as DERA and ESS to carry out a task for which they have had no previous experience. The PRO seem to think that they have that ability and that Quality Control procedures will ensure a satisfactory product. Only time will tell. The second point is the limited availability, not everyone has access to the Internet and the cost of obtaining the required information will be a deterrent to many researchers.

The third point which has upset a lot of people is the fact that researchers are being asked to pay for access to documents already paid for by the British taxpayer in the collection and storage of the census material and which should be in the public domain. These are being prepared by an organisation which is part of the Civil Service, funded by the taxpayer and which by some quirk of government speak is called a commercial organisation. The Treasury would appear to be the only winners in this particular exercise. As was said recently it is taxation through the cellar as well as through the back door.

N.P.

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Potton at the South Pole.

On 4th January 2000 two Britons set a double record when they arrived at the South Pole. Mike and Fiona Thornewill became the first married couple to reach either pole while Mrs Thornewill was the first British woman to walk to the South Pole. The photographs of the couple which appeared on the front pages of the national dailies and in other media clearly showed the logo of Potton Homes one of their sponsoring companies. The couple's Nottinghamshire home was built for them by the Potton company who agreed to sponsor part of the costs of the expedition. The photographs from one of the national dailies have been added to our archives.

Potton in 1899

adapted from Bedfordshire Times articles of the period

Potton is a market town with a history and though in consequence of modern diversions of industry to other locations it has suffered decline, it has capabilities of future revival.

Cyclists from the Sandy direction approach Potton by a pleasant spin of three miles over the woodland hill occupied by Viscount Peel's estate. Across the fields, on the left, as visitors near Potton, they will see one of the very few windmills remaining in this county; and though they leave the trees and singing birds behind them when they enter Potton, they are reminded of the latter by the inn which bears the quaint sign of the "Blackbirds". The guess is permissible that the "Blackbirds" is a reminiscence of the three "martlets azure" in the arms of the Burgoynes who held the Potton manor through several generations

Many parts of the town have an antiquated appearance. There is at least one specimen of a house in which the first story projects considerably over the basement (the only one left in that street by the great fire) and a handsome house of business in the Market Place bears the date of 1697. The Market House has a striking appearance with its square clock tower and the quality of solid oak employed in its construction. The date of the present building, locally described as a Dutch Market House, has been lost sight of

The old manor house, which stood not far from the church, on the north-east side of the town has disappeared and in its place stands the handsome and conspicuous mansion built by Mr Wagstaff.

Church and manor stand in close proximity to each other as a natural consequence of the original dependence of one upon the other. That the population should have settled at a distance from the church is doubtless due to the fact that people had to build their

homes outside the manorial park. But the result is unfortunate as regards the relation of the people to the church. At Potton most of the worshippers have a long distance to walk to reach the church. Many causes have coincided to encourage the growth of nonconformity in rural places but in a very great number of cases the distance of the church from the houses has been not the least influential amongst these causes.

Potton Church is picturesquely placed on the brow of a hill. It has a remarkable north porch having large arched entrances on the north and west. Over this porch is a parvise now used for a Sunday School class. The Rev. G. Evans Gwynne has been vicar since 1890. The churchyard is remarkable for the great number of headstones very elaborately carved. A capacious Sunday school stands at the bottom of the hill.

The nonconformity of Potton appears to have had its commencement in the labours of the evangelical clergymen of Everton and Wrestlingworth :- Berridge and Hicks and in the visits of their friend John Wesley to Potton and its neighbourhood. In 1850 the present large Wesleyan chapel was built in front of the site of the former one. There is now a resident minister (Rev Mr Webber). The Congregationalists erected one of the largest chapels in the district in 1848. In 1894 the Rev D. Clayton took charge of the church. The Particular Baptists also have a chapel here, the present building may date from 1862. The resident pastor is the Rev Iscaiah Smith. The Salvation Army has commodious barracks not far from the Market Place.

Potton possesses a multiplicity of small charities together realising about £200 a year. Funds are applied to the payment of apprenticeship fees; fees for three annual sermons; the promotion of psalmody; the distribution of bread and flour at Christmas and of coals during the winter; donations to the Potton Clothing Club, the Bedford General Hospital and Addenbrook's Hospital.

As to the present state of trade in Potton, the chief evidence of the former existence of a "considerable" market are to be found in the Market House building itself and in the spacious yards of the inns. Under modern conditions of trade there is little hope of reviving the market as it formerly existed, but it is certainly possible for Potton to achieve an equal or greater prosperity in other directions.

Naturally Potton shares in the Market Gardening industry of the district. Messrs Kitchener & Co have established a flourishing engineering business in the town; and F.W.Braybrooks carries on what is said to be one of the largest manufactories of parchment in the kingdom. There is also a considerable trade done in shoes and leather leggings as well as wool-stapling.

There are large schools for boys, girls and infants, under a school Board. Science classes are also carried on at the Board School. In 1880 a cemetery was laid out in Sandy Road and furnished with a neat mortuary chapel. The town possesses a Gas Company, a Fire Brigade, a number of Benefit Clubs, several temperance societies and political organisations. There is a considerable amount of public spirit in the town.

Peter Ibbett, Programme Secretary

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Book Review

The Garden at Chatsworth - by The Duchess of Devonshire
ISBN 0-7112-1430-1, price £25 or available from your local library

This wonderful book tells the story of the development of the gardens of Chatsworth House through 450 years and is lavishly illustrated throughout with the most beautiful colour photographs. The added bonus for those who attended last years talk on the Crystal Palace is a lengthy chapter on the work of Sir Joseph Paxton during his 32 years at Chatsworth. At last I can understand how a man of his lowly background achieved such notoriety and social standing. MJL

Mr John Alexander Whitehead of Cockayne Hatley - Aircraft Manufacturer

Most readers will know something of the story of Mr Whitehead, who planted more than a million apple trees at Cockayne Hatley. When I wrote a booklet about those times (and talked to the PHS), I said that Mr Whitehead manufactured aeroplanes in the First World War. I must admit that this was very much hearsay and I only half believed it. However it was true.

I obtained the details when there was a knock at the door and the person on the doorstep announced he was Mr Whitehead's grandson from Australia. How he found me I don't know but I was delighted to find out more of his family history. His mother was Helene Whitehead, Mr Whitehead's eldest daughter. His mother had told him that there was no bequest to the family as Mr Whitehead had "run off with an actress, and left all his money to her". I could tell him that, although Mr Whitehead might well have had an affair with an actress, he left no money as he used it all on his wild schemes.

I learnt that Mr Whitehead had indeed built up a major aircraft manufacturing business in the First World War. He was the largest supplier of the famous "Sopwith Pup" to the Royal Flying Corps. He manufactured more than 1000 aeroplanes between 1914 and 1919 before going bankrupt for the first - but not the last - time. I was given a number of leaflets, articles and pictures which I have incorporated in the latest edition of my booklet. One of the items I acquired was copies of "*Whitecraft*" - the house journal of the enterprise, - run by the employees. I thought it might be amusing to reproduce one of the "Letters to the Editor" from the issue of September 1917 - which proved controversial :

To the Editor of "Whitcraft"

Dear Sir, - Why is it that girls who are engaged in work of national importance dress much more outrageously than the rest of their sex?

It is no business of mine to dictate the conduct of any of my fellow creatures, but as a student of humanity, I am always eager to learn of other people's motives.

Anyone who, for instance, who meets during off-hours the girl workers in our factories and offices, must be greatly struck by the startling and reckless character of many of their costumes. This is no sweeping condemnation of every woman and girl employed, but is based on an observation of the majority. An enormous number of Englishwomen have agreed to abandon for the duration of the war that ridiculous institution called Fashion. One would, therefore, naturally think that those ladies who are actually engaged on war machinery would be the first to realise the folly of adopting freakish garments. Such is not the case, however. They flaunt themselves in the public gaze in attire which is more elaborate than abundant, special attention being devoted to semi-transparent hose and boots with eccentric and startling uppers.

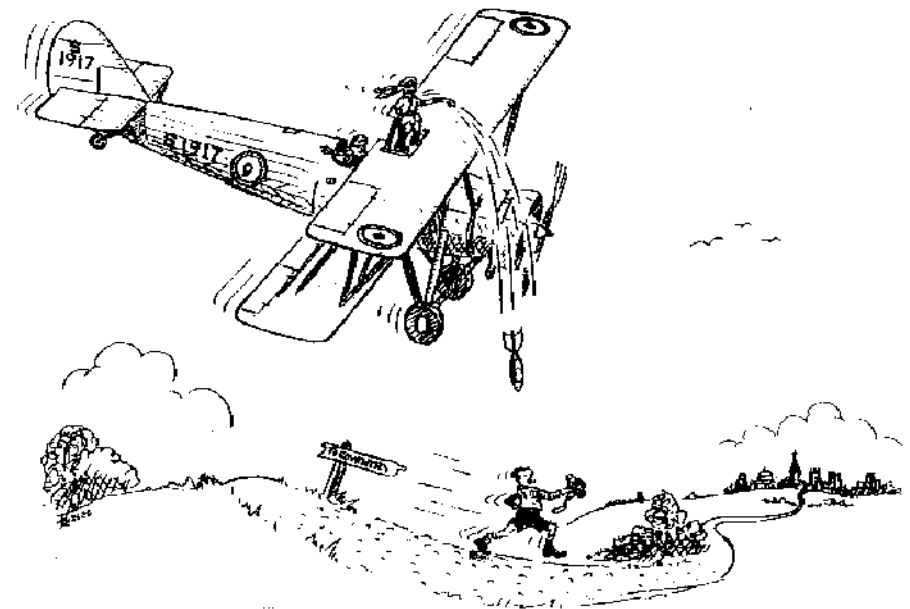
There are several possible explanations. One is that with so many young men away they have a harder struggle to attract the few who remain, to say nothing of those on leave. Or perhaps their earnings are so much more than before the war that they can imagine no better purpose to which their increased incomes can be devoted than their own personal adornment.

If it is the latter reason, it is as well to point out that money spent on the person is not necessarily spent on adornment. Too many of them, I am afraid, forget that an attractive person is always attractive no matter how simply dressed; and that the most expensive and amazing wardrobe in the world will not make a plain girl pretty.

*Yours very truly
OBSERVER*

No doubt the writer would today be classed as a "male chauvinist pig". Not surprisingly, the lady factory workers also took this view. In the next issue, "Aunt Trixie" in "Girls' Corner" reported a large pile of letters about the article which were "angry, sarcastic, pitying, contemptuous and so on", and suggested that the editor should be sacked. A letter from "One of the Flappers" said OBSERVER "must be a lineal descendant of Peeping Tom of Coventry", and should meet the same fate.

Tony Crossley, Cockayne Hatley.



The Lacemakers of Bedfordshire.

During my research into my family history I repeatedly came across the occupation of Lace Maker, even children as young as five participating with the rest of the family. I am sure my family were not unusual and anyone researching their Bedfordshire family, or indeed, having an interest in lace making will, hopefully find my information of interest.

I assumed that lacemakers in Bedfordshire would naturally, be making Bedfordshire lace. However, I was surprised to learn that this was not the case, certainly not in the early days. In fact up to the middle of the 1800s, the lace made was Buckinghamshire but when machine-made lace started to be made, some other method and design had to be evolved to compete. Buckinghamshire lace is apparently very labour intensive being closely worked with fine thread.

In 1851 the Great Exhibition was held and Maltese lace was exhibited, which was a more open design with petals and plaits. This was in fact adapted to the Buckinghamshire patterns and became Bedfordshire lace. Lace of this pattern was made all over the country not just in Bedfordshire.

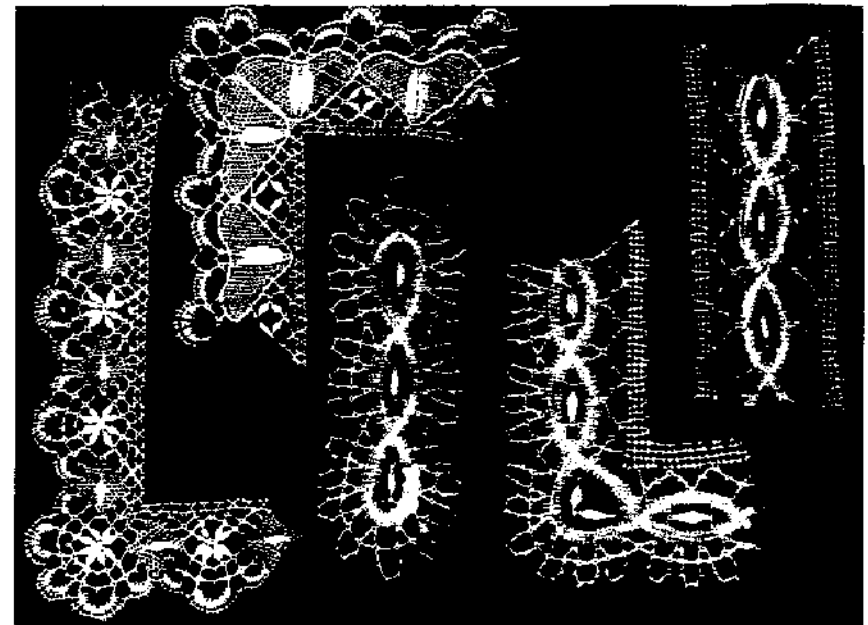
Further investigation of this fascinating subject revealed that the origins of lacemaking in this country are unknown but it is believed that, like so many other of the cottage industries it was developed by the French Huguenot and Flemish refugees who settled in the Midlands in the 16th century.

The popularity of lace followed the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of King Henry VIII. Before that lace was made only for church use but the Elizabethans began to use it in their flamboyant fashions.

By the 19th century, lacemaking was a well established cottage industry. Woman and children worked long hours in cramped conditions with poor light and for little pay. I remember my Grandmother sitting poring over her lacemaking cushion in the light of an oil lamp. Each family, I am told, made only one pattern and it was jealously guarded. Dealers travelled around the area collecting lace and taking it to a central town for delivery countrywide. Honiton is a well known and distinctive lace, but unlike the name suggests was not made solely in Honiton but, in fact all over Devon.

The dealer would measure the length of lace being made and mark across the width with wax. He would then cut off the lace and on his next visit make sure the wax was still there. In this way the lacemaker could not cheat and sell her lace which had been made with his thread.

Jean McLennan.



Bedfordshire laces

The 1881 Census.

The issue of the 1881 census on CD has proved a welcome addition to the information available to family history researchers. Once one manages to navigate through the odd way in which the country is sub-divided and fathom out the transcription errors which appear all too frequently, a search can be made in a fraction of the time needed to plough through the pages of an original census.

The section labelled East Anglian Region consists of the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Norfolk, Northampton, Rutland and Suffolk. Essex appears in Greater London East with Buckingham, Hertford, Sussex and Kent. Greater London West extends from Surrey as far as Hampshire and the Isle of White. Lancashire and Yorkshire become the North Central Region and further north there is The Northern Borders and Miscellany Region which, as well as the counties usually associated with the Border area of northern England also includes the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and the Royal Navy or that part of it which is not included as Royal Navy (Scotland).

Looking through the Potton entries it is obvious from the number of errors that no-one with local knowledge was involved in the transcription or checking process although all the publicity for the CDs states that this was the case. As the work was carried out from 1987 onwards it is surprising that we, as a society were not asked for our assistance particularly as we were active in the field of family history research at that time. There were only two enumerators involved in the original census so the excuse of having to decipher lots of different handwritings doesn't stand up. The sort of errors so far discovered include Sheffield Close appearing as Sheffield Glen, Moons Corner as Moors Corner and Wrestlingworth spelled in three different ways. One lady is said to have been born in Bigglesworth and there are other spelling variations.

The worst errors from the point of view of a family historian are those where a name is transcribed incorrectly in one or two cases, but in other places in the same document it appears in its normal form.

Where this happens it is quite possible to lose a family and wonder why they were not where they were supposed to be. Examples in Potton are John Bartle and his family listed as Barke, two of the Seamer families are shown as Learner in one instance and as Jearner in the other. The children of Ralph Gravestock are incorrectly shown under his mother-in-law's name of Clark. One wonders what Mrs Croot in Sun Street would have made of being called Mrs Crool. Was 18 year old Rebecca Boness really a farm labourer and her 16 year old brother David a domestic servant.

Another slightly confusing point is that in some places the transcribers have added in the coded notes used by government statisticians to identify classes of workers. For example Market Gardeners are annotated (ND), a gardener employed by someone would be classed as a domestic so that self employed Market Gardeners become ND or non-domestic. In one place one finds a family of 3 ladies in their early twenties, one with a 4 month old illegitimate child being described as coprolite dealers instead of sorters, one mistake which can be put down to poor hand-writing. Workers who operated the steam ploughing tackle and others employed in Kitchener's works are annotated as Agricultural Attendants, a term which may have meant something to an urban statistician but which means nothing in the local context. Those of us in this area will realise what should be in place of these errors but to someone from another part of the country or from abroad where these CDs are available and who is looking for Potton ancestors can run into problems which can really only be solved by coming back to someone with local knowledge. Problems which would have been avoided if the project had been organised correctly in the first place.

I hope I have not given the impression that this resource has too many failings to be of use, that certainly is not the case, the search facilities allow the quick retrieval of information which would be difficult or virtually impossible to find using the photocopied version of the census material.

The number of inhabitants of Potton in 1881 was 2009 of whom 1346 were born here, in other words 33% of them were incomers. Looking at the other parts of the country it is possible to locate 1298 people born in Potton but living elsewhere. A large number had not travelled far, 376 in other parts of Bedfordshire, 69 in Gamlingay and 28 in Cambridge, part of a total of 146 in Cambridgeshire. There were 73 in Hunts and 70 in Herts but as might be expected the greatest concentration was in the London area with 156 in Middlesex, 55 in Surrey and 161 in the area known as Greater London East but which should more correctly be called the South-East of Britain. Those who had travelled greater distances included 5 in the South-West, 5 in Wales, 21 in Lancashire, 3 in the Lake District and no less than 44 in Yorkshire.

In a few cases a whole family had moved but the majority were individuals moving away most likely in search of work. Many of the 1298 were ladies who had left Potton for employment reasons and married in the area where they had settled. Much research would be required in order to find out which of the Potton families they originally belonged to. A few of the men were self-employed with their own businesses but these were few and far between. The outstanding one found so far was Alfred Tyler, born in Potton in 1831 to Henry Tyler, a shoemaker and his wife Mary. In 1881 Alfred was in Leicester. Described as a shoe dealer, he employed 96 men and 35 women as well as being a farmer with a further 10 men and 2 boys taking care of that side of his business.

It would be interesting to carry out research into these 'emigrants' from Potton to see if there was any pattern in their movement or whether it was purely economics which triggered their moves but there are more important projects under way at present so that one will have to be postponed for a while.

One thing apparent when comparing the LDS CDs with the photocopy of the original census purchased from the PRO, is how badly the latter has faded. A copy has been made on disc and will be printed as soon as the name index of the inhabitants is completed.

N.P.

NOTICE BOARD

A Millennium of History in Potton.

Potton History Society will be playing an important part in the week of celebrations organised for early July. One of the first shows in Potton's Millennium Marquee will be a dramatic afternoon presentation by members of the History Society featuring the changes in life that faced generations of Pottonians over the last 1000 years. This will be supported by a week long exhibition of photographs and items from the Society Archives which will illustrate life over the last hundred years in Potton. Society members will also provide Town Walks during the week.

We would appreciate any help from members in providing this millennium contribution. Any help with our "show" from active participation to backstage help would be greatly appreciated. We would also like help with our walks which will enable us to bring Potton's history to more people. Please contact George or myself.

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Newsletter no 29

Your articles, letters, comments and memories are always most welcome. Please pass items to Norman Parry, Mary Leigh or any committee member. The deadline for copy to be included in the next issue will be 1st August 2000.