PHS Album128d-01 Streets Station Road Potton & District Club

What is the History of the Station Road building which houses the Potton & District Club?

What material does the Potton History Society have in its archives?

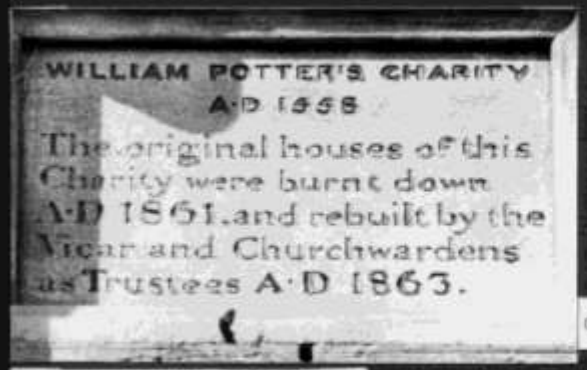
What do YOU know that we can add to the archives?

PHS Album128d-02 Streets Station Road Potton & District Club

This air photograph from 1929 is part of a set in the PHS archives. It shows Potton station yard at the bottom left and Bury Hill at the upper right. Oak Crescent (bottom right) is newly built. Station Road leads down to Blackbird Street and Horne Lane and Home Farm with its barns and adjacent Tanyard buildings. The land where the present Potton Club premises now stands is still a field. Plans were already afoot to erect a new building on the site.

PHS Album128d-03 Streets Station Road Potton & District Club

POTTON CONSOLIDATED CHARITIES



Commemorative Stone

Construction of the Technical School, 1930

Potter's Cottages, Horsalow Street

Mrs Pettifer with Barbara, Dorothy and Raymond.

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Compiled by Peter Ibbett from History Society Archives Album 009-12-1930

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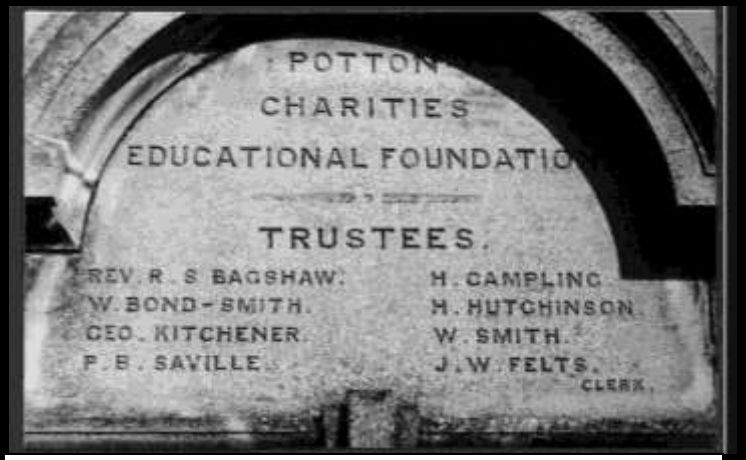
PHS Album 109c 32 Future Street Names Campling Road

POTTON'S HISTORIAN Biggleswade Chronicle June 15th 1951

We regret to record the death of one of the best known residents of Potton, Mr. Harbord Arthur Campling, of the Market Square, who died at his home on Sunday evening after an illness of six months, at the age of 84 years. Mr. Campling was born at Potton and at the age of 18 entered the business of ladies' and gents.' tailor and outfitter, conducted by his father in a small lock-up shop in the centre of the Square, and at a shop and dwelling house at the corner of Bull Street. When the tailor's business was flourishing he employed several people. His shop was a meeting place for innumerable friends, where lively argument and discussions took place on national and local affairs. Mr. Campling's life was spent in the service of his fellow townspeople. He served on the Parish Council for an unbroken period of 31 years, at one time being vice-chairman, and held other important offices. For many years he was a School Manager. As a member of the Potton Charity Trustees he was instrumental, with others, in getting the Technical School in Station Road built. He was at one time an overseer and for many years Managing Director of the old Potton Gas Company. On the formation of the Special Constables during the first World War, he became a member and reached the rank of sergeant. He served for over 26 years and on retirement he was the recipient of a presentation. After the 1914-18 war, Mr. Campling assisted in the formation of the Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers which later, with the help of the late Messrs. Fred Banes and G. Mayston, resulted in the formation of the United Services Men's Club in Royston Street. He assisted with the formation of the Potton Bowling Club and was for many years its captain. Until about six months ago he always enjoyed an evening on the rinks. In his earlier years he helped to form the old Potton Town Football Club and at one time was its captain playing at outside right. He had also played for Biggleswade and often walked to and from various places to play. In his younger days he was an athlete and a good hurdler. He took a keen interest in sports and often acted as judge in local events. He took particular interest in cards and was the first man to introduce solo whist to the parish. A widely read man, he was much interested in local history, having a wonderful memory for dates. Much of the historical information he collected has been published in the local Press and elsewhere. It was doubtful whether anyone possessed a more valuable collection of historical papers concerning the Town. Some years ago his history of the Old Shambles with a sketch was published in the Sunday Times and recently an article appeared in the "Bedfordshire Magazine." Mr. Campling also collected old coins. In his younger days he was a staunch Liberal. He leaves a widow and daughter, for whom much sympathy is felt.



Harbord in 1890 preparing to lead the 'Skeleton Army' to oppose the arrival of the Salvation Army in Potton.

THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL

After the opening of the Board Schools in Potton, monies from Educational Trusts were used to pay the school fees of poor children, until the coming of free education in 1891. (The rates were: Labourers' children under seven years, 1d. per week; above seven, 2d; for the children of farmers, tradesmen, artizans, and other classes higher than labourers, double the rates named). Approximately, sixty boys and sixty girls benefited yearly.

A clause in the Scheme, sealed 13th June 1879 by the Charity Commissioners stated that prizes could also be awarded to

> 'deserving boys and girls, being children of bona fide resident poor inhabitants of the Parish of Potton, attending any efficiently conducted Public Elementary School in the same parish. . .who shall have, during the previous year been most distinguished for good conduct, proficiency in learning, industry, and regularity of attendance at school, and who shall have satisfactorily passed the examination by Her Majesty's Inspectors in the standard suitable to their age.'

An Assistant Commissioner visited Potton on 20th December 1895 to confer with the Charity Trustees. His report, received in January the following year, stated

> 'The Commissioners are surprised to learn that for some years the Trustees have so far disregarded the provisions of the Scheme under which the Charities are governed as to apply the income of Charities, specifically appropriated to Education purposes by that scheme to purposes altogether alien to the trusts. The diversion of educational funds to the relief of the poor by gifts in the nature of doles constitutes a breach of Trust which calls for immediate remedy. It is understood that the Trustees have been to some extent influenced by the introduction of free education. . .neither of the alternative methods of application suggested by the Scheme for the educational funds is necessarily rendered obsolete by the abolition of school fees. At the same time the Commissioners would be willing to authorise a third alternative method of application in the form of maintenance of evening or technical classes which might be rendered beneficial in connection with the system of apprenticeship which the Trustees are desirous of developing in connection with the Charities.'

By 1897, a further scheme had been authorised in which

> '£45 shall be applied by the Trustees for educational purposes.'

This sum could be used

> 'In or towards the maintenance of Technical Classes in the said Parish.'

Permission was sought to appoint a mistress to teach cookery to the girls, but although sanction was granted, the Trustees were told not to contribute the whole sum of £45 as it was their duty to expend a considerable portion thereof for the benefit of the boys. Lessons in carpentry, straw plaiting and lace making were mentioned, but not implemented.

Under the Board of Education Act, 1899, an agreement was made between the Board of Education and the Charity Commission. All endowments for educational purposes in Potton were, from 1903, to be called the Consolidated Educational Foundation. This was to consist of

the yearly sum of £45, past accumulations of this sum, and any part of the £50 available for apprenticeship used to aid the training of pupil teachers.

Few claims were made on the Foundation, for by 1914 accumulated funds were in the region of £700. Writing to the Secretary of the Board of Education, Mr. Bond Smith, on behalf of the Potton Trustees, stated

> 'Owing to lack of suitable accommodation no provision exists in the parish for instruction in Manual Training, Household Management, Laundry Work, Dairy Work, etc. The Managers of the School and the Local Education Authority have had the matter under consideration, but as the provision of suitable premises would impose an additional burden upon a parish already heavily rated with special charges, they consider it undesirable to proceed further.
>
> But it is submitted that such forms of instruction are highly desirable particularly in a parish such as Potton, and Trustees propose, with the consent of the Board of Education, to acquire a site and erect premises providing suitable accommodation for instruction in such subjects as those above mentioned, such premises being leased to the Local Education Authority at a purely nominal rent. The Trustees understand that the Local Education Authority is quite willing to provide the instruction if suitable premises are forthcoming.
>
> I am to ask therefore that the Board will sanction the application of accumulated funds in the manner herein described'.

According to a newspaper report, dated April 10th 1914, the Potton Charity Trustees (Rev. A. Shillito, Messrs. W. Bond Smith, H. Campling, J. Manning, J. Pibworth and H. Woodman with the Clerk, Mr. J. W. Felts) had received for consideration from the County Surveyor plans of three school buildings at an estimated cost, respectively, of £350, £450 and £650. The Trustees were directed to look for a suitable site. Permission to proceed was given by the Board of Education on May 29th 1914. Details of all costs, plans and specifications were required. A site of 43 perches, known as Fane's Field, situated on the corner of Back Lane, and Station Road was purchased from Mr. Whitbread on December 23rd 1915 for £56. 5s. No further development took place. Two years later, a request was made by the Managers of Potton Council Schools to the Trustees for the site to be used as a school garden. They were informed that the land had been let to a tenant until it was needed for the building.

Letters continued to pass between the Director of Education (Mr. H. E. Baines) and the Potton Trustees over the matter of rental of premises still to be built. The latter proposed £50 per year for the first ten years and thereafter £5 per annum. (The 1915 proposals had been £35 the first year and £5 thereafter). The Education Committee expressed concern over the suggested increase, especially as it would be expected to provide all necessary equipment and pay the staff. The Trustees were reminded that funds of the Foundation were accumulating at the rate of about £50 per annum.

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Correspondence increased between the two parties in 1919. The trustees pointed out that 75% would have to be added to the 1915 cost of building, due to increased prices and as the Educational Fund was invested in Consols, the amount available had been greatly reduced. If building was commenced, an overdraft would be required, leaving no surplus for management and rates. It was now decided to offer the proposed building to the County Council for a rental of £30 p.a. with no time limit, but this was refused.

Writing on October 18th, 1919, the Clerk of the County Council informed the Trustees that delays were being caused by the consideration of the Scheme for Higher Education for the County, under the Education Act of 1918, but on November 15th the Trustees were told that the Education Committee would be prepared to pay a rental of £30 p.a. for the first ten years and £5 p.a. thereafter. Here the matter appeared to rest.

Ten years after the purchase of the land, interest in the Technical School project was revived. On June 17th, 1925, Mr. Baines wrote to the Clerk of the Trustees, Mr. Felts,

> 'It has been suggested that the Re-organisation Sub-Committee should meet the Trustees of the Potton Consolidated Educational Foundation and the School Managers to discuss the present position and to consider what steps can be taken to utilise the accumulated funds and to give the present generation the benefit of the Charity.'

By July, the County Surveyor was preparing new plans and the Trustees were told to have the land, now used as allotments, available by Lady Day, 1926. A report of activities to date (February 24th 1926) was sent to the Secretary of the Board of Education. The L.E.A. was now prepared to undertake a lease for 99 years from the date of completion, paying a rent of £60 per annum for 30 years and for the remainder of the term, £1 per annum. The Trustees covenated that the premises would be kept in 'good and substantial repair and conditions and insured against fire'. The estimated cost was now £3,750 towards which the Trustees would have, from April 1927, £1,180. They intended to negotiate for a loan.

The reply received from the Board of Education was not encouraging. It was pointed out that no loan would be authorised unless terms allowed for its repayment in 30 years. As £2,570 would be needed, assuming the interest was 5%, a yearly repayment of principal and interest would be in the region of £167. With an income of only £45 from funds and £60 rent, the proposed building scheme was quite beyond the means of the Foundation. But the Trustees persisted in their quest and asked if the plans would be accepted, provided the problem of fund raising could be solved. A number of modifications to the plans were suggested, with a view to reducing costs. The Board still considered the provision of such a building to be too great a financial burden.

Over the next two years the Trustees tried to obtain permission to use funds allocated to the apprenticeship scheme, as few applications for aid were received. This was refused. By October 1929, the estimated building cost of the amended plan was £2,940. £1,673 7s. 9d. was available, so a loan, not exceeding £1,300 at 5% would involve repayments of £87 per annum. This sum would be covered by the yearly income of £105, £18 being left for insurance and maintenance. Permission was given for the Trustees to proceed and invitations for tenders appeared in the local papers.

Construction of the Technical School 1930

Commemorative Stone

R. Bagshaw, W. Bond Smith, G. Kitchener, F. Saville, H. Campling, H. Hutchinson, W. Smith, W. Felts, Clerk.

Photograph: Vera Parry

www.pottonhistorysociety.org.uk

Compiled by Peter Ibbett from History Society Archives 009-12-1930

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Once again the situation was to change. Six tenders were received and the lowest, that of G. Bartle and Son for £3,275 was accepted, although it was more than the anticipated cost. Concern was expressed by the Bedfordshire Education Committee over the actions of the Trustees and many queries were posed in a letter dated November 8th 1930. Explanations were required over the acceptance of a tender £300 more than had been calculated; why the Board of Education was not asked to sanction the additional £300 loan required before the work commenced; why a modification of the design to bring it within the estimated amount was not considered; and how the repayment on a loan of £1,600 could be met. Further unsatisfactory correspondence ensued.

Ultimately, on February 24th, 1931, Mr. George Kitchener, a Trustee, offered a loan of £1,600 at 5½%, repayable at half-yearly instalments over a period of 30 years. The County Council now agreed to pay a rental of £80 per annum for the first 30 years, other conditions being previously stated, the Education Committee having the sole use of the building. The cost of employing the County Surveyor as architect from 1915 was raised as another problem to be solved.

Sixteen years after the purchase of Fane's Field, the Reverend R. S. Bagshaw, Trustee, had the pleasure of performing the opening ceremony of the Potton Practical Centre. He gave a resume of Charity education in Potton and emphasized that only money left for educational purposes had been spent on the building. A large number of parents had assembled, together with senior children for whom the new facilities had been provided. April 1931 was, indeed, a date to be recorded in the story of Potton Charities.

As the end of the thirty year period drew near, the Educational Committee pointed out to the Trustees that the future rent would be a nominal £1 per annum. Repayments of the loan were nearly completed, but only £46 per annum would be definitely available to maintain the building - an impossible task. Many changes had already occurred after the Education Act of 1944, Potton children now receiving their technical education elsewhere, attending schools in Sandy and Biggleswade after the age of eleven. The County Council had, at its own expense, added a kitchen to the building, now known as the Dining Centre, but was not prepared to undertake essential repairs to premises it did not own. The only satisfactory solution appeared to be the transfer of ownership to the authority, who offered, as sitting tenants, the sum of £5.

Many letters were exchanged between the Clerk to the Potton trustees, the Minister of Education, the Charity Commission, the District Valuer and legal representatives. The result of these consultations was a revised figure by the District Valuer, who now offered a site value of £650 to the Trustees.

By an Order, sealed September 4th, 1963, the Minister of Education approved the selling of real estate by the Trustees of Potton Consolidated Educational Foundation, the purchase money

> 'when received by the Trustees shall be immediately invested in any of the securities authorised by law for the investment of Trust Funds.'

The Dining Centre became surplus to requirements in 1981, by reason of the final transfer of Lower School pupils to the new site in Everton Road. Anticipating this situation, the District Plan of 1980 stated that consideration could be given to the use of the Station Road premises for

Nursery Education. But when an advertisment by Bedfordshire County Council of May 29th, 1981 offered the building for sale or long lease, it was realised that the proposal would not be implemented.

Public meetings were held in November 1981 and June 1982 to explore the possibility of retaining the building for local community use. A proposal to test the moral obligation of the County Council to return the building to the town at a reasonable cost was moved. But it appeared that the authority was determined to sell at the highest figure possible. Planning permission for residential construction was sought and granted to widen the opportunities for development. Strong local opinion, however, expressed the feeling that the building should be retained.

After much negotiation, the Technical School was purchased in 1983 by the Potton and District Club and Insititute of Royston Street. Extensive alterations were required, but the Club, a thriving concern, officially opened its new premises on June 16th, 1984. Community organisations have been given the opportunity of using the building, which, in view of its history, has been re-named 'Charities Hall'.

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PLANTING COMMEMORATIVE TREES - 14th January 1954.

Mr.W.Hill and Mr.F.Pierce, left.

Mr.P.Hutchinson and Mr.S.Gurney, below.

On 14th January 1954, four flowering trees were planted outside the Practical Centre in commemoration of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The trees were planted by:-
Mr.S.Gurney and Mr.P.Hutchinson, on behalf of the Governors and Managers of the two Schools.
Mr.P.I.Pierce and Mr.W.J.Hill, Headmasters of the Primary and Secondary Schools respectively.
The Prefects of the County Secondary Modern School.
Janet Gray and John Bloxham, on behalf of the children of the Primary School.

During the Spring the trees have flowered and in years to come they will add considerably to the appearance of the Practical Centre.

Information: 'Potton County Secondary Modern School Magazine - July 1954.' (The First Issue.)

PHS Album128d-08 Streets Station Road Potton & District Club

Educational Events.

July 21st 1951. A Gala Day was held in connection with the Festival of Britain. Funds raised were to be used to provide amenities for the Town's playing fields. This tableau, organised by the School's Meals Service, won first prize.

June 29th 1954.
Open day at Potton Primary School.
Miss Bickerdike's class and a group of proud mothers.

December 1957. Christmas celebrations in the Practical Centre.
Adults, from left to right: Mesdames C.Smith, M.Richardson, P.Goldsmith, I Sherman, E.Robson, E.Price, V.Gurney, E.Westhorp.

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Potton Primary School, 1965

POTTON POOL PROGRESS

£400 has been raised.

'The efforts of the School Swimming Pool Fund Committee had raised £200, which, with a gift of £200 from a local joint Parish Council and Fire Service Fund, placed the Fund in a very satisfactory position, the Potton School headmaster, Mr.F.I.Pierce, told the Managers on May 24th. The pool was being erected on a site at the rear of the dining centre.

Mr.Pierce said he would like to express appreciation to all those in Potton and Dunton who had contributed so generously to the project. They had done extremely well, and he was most grateful....'

Biggleswade Chronicle

The pool was opened by Mrs.F.Hutchinson, wife of the Chairman of Potton Parish Council.

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DONATION BOARD

STATION ROAD - EXTERIOR

The Charities Hall was purchased by the Potton & District Club & Institute in the early 1980s and after major alterations and decorating opened as a Working Men's Club in the middle of 1984.

POTTON CHARITIES
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED IN 1930 BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE POTTON CHARITIES FROM THE INTEREST ON CERTAIN SUMS OF MONEY LEFT FOR THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION BY THE FOLLOWING DONORS:

DAME CONSTANCE BURGOYNE 22ND APRIL 1711
GAVE £50 THE INTEREST OF WHICH TO BE APPLIED TOWARDS TEACHING POOR CHILDREN TO READ AND WRITE.

ALEXANDER ATKINSON 8TH NOVEMBER 1712
GAVE £30 THE INTEREST OF WHICH TO BE APPLIED TOWARDS TEACHING POOR CHILDREN TO READ AND WRITE.

MARY TOTTMAN 2ND FEBRUARY 1727
GAVE £60 ONE THIRD OF THE INTEREST TO BE APPLIED TOWARDS TEACHING POOR CHILDREN TO READ AND WRITE.

HENRY WARD 24TH JANUARY 1739
GAVE £60 PART OF THE INTEREST TO BE APPLIED TOWARDS TEACHING POOR CHILDREN TO READ.

JOHN CARTER IN 1770
GAVE £800 TO PURCHASE LAND THE RENT OF WHICH TO BE APPLIED TO TEACH POOR CHILDREN READING WRITING AND ARITHMETIC.

POTTON
CHARITIES
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

TRUSTEES

REV. R.S. BAGSHAW
W. BOND-SMITH
GEO. KITCHENER
P. B. SAVILLE
M. CAMPLING
H. HUTCHINSON
W. SMITH
J.W.FELTS
Clerk

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MAIN HALL

ENTRANCE HALL

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SNUG

SNOOKER TABLES

DART AREA

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PHS Album128d-13 Streets Station Road Potton & District Club

KEN LAWSON AND BOB HOWES BATTLE IT OUT ON THE SNOOKER TABLE AT POTTON AND DISTRICT CLUB - 2002