By the time members receive this newsletter they will already have had official notification of the details of the **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** which will commence at 2.15 p.m. on **May 13th, 1995** at the Rice Trevor Lower School, Grange Lane, Bromham.

After the formal business of the Annual General Meeting has concluded a full and most interesting programme has been arranged.

At **3.00 p.m. Dr. MARGARET GELLING O.B.E** President of the Place Name Society and Honorary Reader in English Place Name Studies, Department of Mediaeval History, University of Birmingham will address the Association on **PLACE NAMES AND THE LANDSCAPE** with special reference to Bedfordshire. Dr. Gelling is one of the foremost experts on the subject and author of a number of books including *Signposts to the Past* and *Place Names in the Landscape*.

Dr. Gelling's talk will be followed by tea and biscuits after which **STEPHEN COLEMAN** will lead a guided tour of ancient Bromham. A short walk will take delegates to **Bromham Mill**, where currently an exhibition of quilting from local villages is being held, thence to the **Mediaeval Bromham Bridge** which has recently been carefully renovated by the County Council. Finally the tour will enter Bromham Park to the **Mediaeval Village Earthworks** and **St. Owen's Church**.

There will be a small entry charge for those wishing to enter Bromham Mill payable before leaving the school in order to take advantage of group rates.

**Visitors will be very welcome to Dr. Gelling’s talk and the tour of historic Bromham.**
FOURTHCOMING EVENTS
TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS,
the Legacy of the 17th Century.

From the 27th of April until the 30th June 1995, Bedford Museum has an exhibition focusing upon the national and local events, discoveries and characters, during a century fraught with political and social unrest. Meet a Roundhead and a Cavalier and find out what Dr Symcotts prescribed for a puritan lady suffering from stone. What was the importance of the castle mound in Bedford during the Civil War? Why were the local characters John Okey, Elizabeth Pratt, John Gwin and Thomas Tompton famous or, perhaps, infamous? All will be revealed at the museum.

The exhibition forms part of the Bunyan and the 17th Century Festival, in celebration of the Year of the Arts and Culture, which will be held in Bedford from 7th to 11th June 1995.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

Bedfordshire Local History Conference, formally Mid-Beds Local History Conference, is being hosted this year by Toddington Historical Society. Details are being sent to Societies during the last week in April. If your Society has not received full details please contact Mrs Irene Walker, Secretary of Toddington Historical Society, Mulberry Cottage, Park Road, Toddington, Bedfordshire, LU5 6AB. Telephone 01525 872687.

June 17th promises to be a full and interesting day with talks by Dr. Joshua Pollard, Dr. Stephen Bunker and Mr. Ivor Jones, followed by guided tours of this interesting village.
The conference will commence at 9.30 am and finish at 4.30 pm with tea. To ensure seats for your delegation book early.

THE RURAL POPULATION

This Weekend Conference is being held by The Local Population Studies Society at Lansdowne Campus at De Montford University, Bedford. The conference consists of a series of daytime and evening lectures & workshops by well known speakers, including ‘Sources for Bedfordshire Villages’, from 1750’ by Chris Pickford ‘The 19th century Bedfordshire Agricultural Labourer’ by Dr. Nigel Agar and Village Self-Sufficiency in Services, 19th century Hertfordshire by Catherine Crompton. The conference is open to non-members and bookings (residential or non-residential) must be made by 28th. June 1995, separate bookings for Saturday or Sunday are available. Further details from conference Secretary, Dr. D. R. Mills, 17 Rectory Lane, Branston, Lincoln, LN4 1NA. (Tel: 01 522 791 764 or Christine Jones on 01 438 358 229.)

VIDEO RECORDING OF THE PAST

A video, ‘LUTON CELEBRATES - 50 years of History (1920s-1970s)’, has just been released. The video, compiled from the comprehensive collection of archive material held at Luton Central Library, contains original film footage of events, buildings and people of Luton and goes back to the 1920s. The video is billed as very entertaining, highly informative and historically accurate, the research for it was carried out by the Luton Historical Society. The video costs just £10.99 and it or further information can be obtained from Helen McMahon, Marketing and Policy Development, County Leisure Services, Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP.

County Leisure Services and Luton Historical Society are to be congratulated for their enterprise in producing this video and making this compilation of unique footage more user friendly.

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION would be interested to learn of any film in private or society hands that could be collated into videos to document the aspects of history throughout the County. Amateur films often contain a unique record of, furnishing, transport, pastimes and events in the context of Bedfordshire. Owners of such films are often unaware of the historical value of their ‘family films’. If you have or know of such films that could be made available please let the editor or one of the committee know.

The Shire Guide to Bedfordshire

An enlarged and completely revised edition of this guide by James Dyer will be published on the 12th May. The new edition has 110 pages (compared with 64 in the 1988 edition) and includes both colour and black and white illustrations. It is an A5 paperback and will cost £5.99. It is hoped that copies will be available at the AGM on the 13th May.

1881 Census

In order to help create a national index of the 1881 census, members of the Bedfordshire Family History Society transcribed the original documents into a form suitable for computer input. The Bedfordshire index has since been issued on microfiche, by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and the forms returned to the BFHS. The transcriptions are in pencil and contain the same information as the originals. However, because of pressure of space, they include some information which has been abbreviated or omitted from the microfiche.

To make these transcriptions available for use, the Trustees of the Harlington Heritage Trust have agreed that the papers can be kept at the Trust’s Heritage Centre where they will be open to inspection. If you wish to see the documents please contact John Thurston on 01525 - 874683 to make an appointment to visit the Centre, which is situated in the grounds of Harlington Upper School, Goswell End Road, Harlington.
UNEMPLOYED DURHAM MINERS CAME TO POTTON

Norman Parry

The first of the Land Settlement Association schemes to help in alleviating unemployment was set up in Potton in 1935 not without some local opposition based on fears of its effect on the local economy and apparently orchestrated for political motives. The trouble started when a Mr Gammons, the executive officer of the LSA saw two cottagers and asked if they would be willing to leave their homes to make room for married miners and their families once their training had been completed. Rumours spread and although the LSA strenuously denied that any evictions would take place and that it was their policy to build new houses on the land which had been given by Percy Malcolm Stewart (later Sir Malcolm) local feelings ran high and a meeting was called for the 29th January 1935 with the aim of passing a resolution against the Durham miners coming to Potton.

The man believed to have been the organizer of the meeting was Mr J A Whitehead the owner of the Cockayne Hatley estate where he had formed the organization known as Copo Ltd or Cox’s Orange Pippin Orchards to which the public were asked to subscribe by purchasing apple trees. Whitehead was a flamboyant character who appears to have been quite good at making and losing fortunes, he was popular with his workers having brought some additional employment to the area in the depressed years of the 1930s but his popularity did not extend to the establishment who regarded his money-making schemes as dubious if not illegal.

The letters which have survived are mainly those from Sir H Trustram Eve to Stewart, Eve was the senior partner in the firm of J R Eve responsible for the Stewart estate management. Although based in London, Eve seems to have been well supplied with information about the local scene by his Bedford office and by Mr Braybrooks of Potton, it is surprising how fast communication was, modern systems with all their technology cannot match the speed of exchange of information which took place in the 1930s. On the day before the Potton meeting Eve sent to Stewart a copy of the briefing he had prepared for the MP for Mid-Beds, Mr A T Lennox-Boyd who intended to be at the meeting in the company of Mr Gammons. Not one for mincing his words Eve was very derogatory in his references to Whitehead, and accused him of leading the agitation against LSA and the Durham men. He goes on to say Whitehead “once thought he would be a candidate for Mid-Beds” as if this in itself was to be deplored and then “any project he takes up is doomed from the start”.

After detailing the negotiations with government departments and the part played by Stewart in providing the land and money, Eve again comes back to the subject of the meeting with the remark that “the whole thing is simply this mad agitator Whitehead” The briefing continues with the advice that Lennox-Boyd should emphasize the support for the government’s action and should distance himself from the LSA who were bound to make mistakes in the early stages. He points out that the two cottages were not required for the Durham men who would be accommodated in the Manor House and again refers to, “the whole thing is this madman Whitehead, you know all about his apple scheme and 10/-”, a reference to one of the appeals for money to finance Copo.

The 29th January meeting was well reported, locally and nationally. Miss Coules, a secretary from the Bedford office summarized events as, “The meeting at Potton last night was a great success. Lennox-Boyd and Gammons were there and they sat at the back of the meeting and let Whitehead and his followers speak right up to the point of passing the resolution against the Durham miners coming to Potton. Then Lennox-Boyd got up and fired questions at them and smashed them up completely. Whitehead cleverly replied by saying that his daughter had met with an accident and he could not stay any longer as he had to be at her bedside.”

Then Lennox-Boyd spoke for an hour and answered all questions that were fired at him and finally the meeting petered out with no resolution being passed. It is now assured that the Durham miners will meet with a warm welcome at Potton. They will definitely be housed in the Manor House and looked after by Larby. They will not be parked out in Potton. No tenants are going to be turned out of their cottages, there has been a further assurance on this point. No man has received notice to quit as was rumoured.”

The News Chronicle stated that a resolution condemning the experimental settlement of 40 Durham miners on small holdings in Potton as causing them “to jump from the frying pan into the fire” was withdrawn at a mass meeting. The paper reported Whitehead as saying that although they had every sympathy with the Durham miners in their plight, there were unemployed in their midst and to bring miners to the land in Bedfordshire was as foolish as carrying coals to Newcastle. The resolution was about to be moved when from the back of the hall Lennox-Boyd asked that he might say a few words, although subjected to constant interruptions at the start he and Gammons put the case for the experiment with such phrases as “For God’s sake do recognize the fact that the conditions of the unemployed men in Durham are a hell upon earth compared with the conditions of unemployed men in Bedfordshire. We must give these men a chance”.

The opposition did not completely give up, a further meeting was arranged at the Central Hall, Potton for the 6th February, this was billed as a mass protest meeting in opposition to the new Land Settlement scheme. The speakers were J Lovell of the National Smallholder’s Association; Prof Maurice Dod.

Continued on page 4
UNEMPLOYED DURHAM MINERS CAME TO POTTON (cont from page 3)

MA. of Cambridge and the Chairman was Mr. Harry Chessum. The local contacts of Lennox-Boydd and Eve did their homework prior to this meeting, although Braybrooks said that he knew nothing about Lovell and Dod he forwarded the information that Chessum was a Wrestlingworth man who had just come to live in Potton and that "there is not a Potton man taking any interest in the meeting as far as is known". He also said that Whitehead's name did not appear and that as far as could be gathered he had nothing to do with this meeting. Another unnamed writer said that Whitehead had telephoned to inform Lennox-Boydd that he, Whitehead had nothing to do with this meeting but that it was an outcome of the earlier one. The writer added that Lovell was a paid agitator who worked for the Liberal candidate and that Dod was a socialist don. The MP. and the LSA decided to ignore the meeting preferring to regard it as an opposition meeting in the political sense and to have one of their own at some future date. It seems that the people of Potton took the same attitude because nothing further appears in the surviving documentation to indicate that the second meeting generated any interest.

By the 15th March 1935 the Bedfordshire Times and Independent was able to publish details of interviews with six of the Durham men who were full of enthusiasm at the opportunity being given to them after four years of unemployment and they had nothing but praise for the welcome that they had received from the people of Potton. Mr. F W Braybrooks was quoted as saying: "I am just looking in to assure them that the people of Potton bear no animosity towards them and that we intend to do everything to make them feel among friends. All the agitation against them has been engineered by people not living in the town and at the recent meetings here and at Sandy no Potton person has been present in an official capacity. The meeting at Potton was more for the purpose of boosting the Smallholders Association than for anything else".

Although there was a return to the north-east by some of the original "settlers". Geordie names and accents can still be found in the local area and the Land Settlement Association continued in operation for fifty years until finally being disbanded and its properties sold in 1985.

Based on extracts from files 877 and 878 in the Bedford County Record Office.

COMMON GROUND WANT YOUR PARISH MAPS

Common Ground are planning a national gathering 1996, followed by regional displays and local shows of parish maps. They are searching for all those that have been made. If your map fits the criteria below let them know. They request slides, photographs or photocopies of the map together with details of why and how it was made, by whom and anything you consider is important about it. Common Ground also wish to know if your Society, library etc. would like to host a local show.

Common Ground defines a Parish Map as follows -
It "is people's own definition of their locality, Rather than a precise cartographic representation. It should be your idea of your home place, the street or neighbourhood not necessarily the civic parish."
It "shows what people value about their locality. It illustrates the locally distinctive, the everyday things that make your place different from the next."
It "includes the emotional and the subjective responses to a place which cannot be measured or counted."
It "can be made by any one - a group or individual - of any place urban or rural, in any medium or manner and should be displayed in a public place."
It "is the starting point for local action - conservation of wild life, open spaces, buildings. History in the landscape, footpaths etc."
It "demonstrates that people care about their locality and are willing to stand up for it."

For further information contact Beatrice Mayfield, Common Ground, Seven Dials Warehouse, 44, Earlham Street, London, WC2H 9LA.

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