

POTTERHANWORTH BUS SHELTER

Potterhanworth Bus Shelter has stood opposite the village green for more than half a century. Over the years, whilst meeting its purpose of sheltering waiting passengers from the elements it has largely come to be taken for granted. Hardly anyone who uses it or passes by it has a clue as to how it got there or who was responsible for providing this basic facility.

Over the years, like so much public property it has been the target of vandalism and defacement, but it survives pretty well intact. It has often become a meeting place for bored young people and a centre of mischief and trouble, sometimes so much so that there have even been calls for its demolition and removal. The people who struggled to provide this facility, most of whom are no longer with us, would be horrified to hear such a suggestion. This article attempts to record their motivation, efforts and determination to provide Potterhanworth with its bus shelter, in the face of what today would be seen as incomprehensible bureaucracy and obstacles.

It seems that the project kicked off with a committee known as the Bus Shelter Committee that made enquiries as to the possibility of providing a shelter as early as 1949 and set about raising funds. The 1950s were a great time for clubs and committees. It seems there was a committee for almost everything, The Water Tower, The War Memorial and most crucially in the drive to provide a bus shelter, a committee known as the Parish Fund Committee. This latter committee was set up to raise and provide funds for village causes and eventually metamorphosed to become Potterhanworth Playing Field Committee.

In September 1949 the Parish Council on behalf of the Bus Shelter Committee approached a firm in London known as William Wynn Ltd, industrial developers, who were suppliers of bus shelters. This firm replied that “they were unable, for the time being, to consider the erection of shelters in the areas of parish councils”. The letter continued that “this position arises from the fact that steel, used in the manufacture of shelters, is in such limited supply that we are obliged to specify that they shall be provided only at the most urgent points, measured in terms of the volume of passenger traffic”. The letter concluded by saying that “You will readily appreciate such points are usually located in congested city and urban areas”.

This letter gives an insight into the state of the domestic economy at that time. After the Second World War materials of all kinds were in extremely short supply, especially building materials and steel. This was due to the housing and reconstruction effort, and if this were not enough, by 1950 the cold war was well under way and Britain embarked on massive re-armament drive making steel almost unobtainable. Building of all kinds was strictly controlled by licences and little projects such as Potterhanworth’s bus shelter attracted a minimum or nil priority.

Undeterred, a Mr. JT Warriner, on behalf of the committee wrote to the Kesteven Association of Parish Councils, (KAPC), in July 1950 to solicit help, having no doubt got wind of a proposed scheme to provide bus shelters in Great Britain to mark the Festival of Britain that was to be held in 1951. Mr. Warriner can hardly have been encouraged by the reply he received.

The Association advised that the main difficulty was to obtain building licences but there was “considerable hope” that provision for licences would be made in 1951. The Association’s letter continued that an application for planning authority must be made on “form CP2”, and it would better if this were done by the Parish Council. The letter then advised that neither a voluntary committee nor a parish council were permitted to erect any seats or shelters on the highway. It would have to be sponsored by the District Council and County Council who would advise correct procedures in due

course. Finally the letter advised that unless the parish council adopted the public improvements act of 1860 the parish council would not be allowed to contribute to the shelter, and only then if 50% of the cost had been raised by public subscription.

No doubt the committee were by now reeling at this list of obstacles, but the Association concluded its advice by saying “do not be discouraged by these preliminary details, we will help you through!” It was clear from this point that the project was not going to be easy and that the parish council would have to front it

In late July 1950 the parish council were advised by The Kesteven Association of Parish Councils, in part contradiction of previous advice, that parish councils could now contribute financially to such schemes. The parish council were now told not to complete form CP2 and not to employ an architect to draw up plans. The letter ended “you will be required to use an architect, detailed from headquarters”.

In early August the Kesteven Association of Parish Councils wrote to supply the name of the nominated architect to be used, a Mr. BG Gibson of Louth and stated that the Festival Committee would require to know that Potterhanworth were employing him before they would issue a building licence. Also with the letter were lengthy application forms for submission to the Festival Committee along with a long winded general specification of what the bus shelter should and should not contain. Interestingly the use of glass was not favoured because of breakages. Perhaps this answers the criticism that some have made that the bus shelter has no side windows and that one cannot stand in the bus shelter and see the bus coming and risks standing there whilst the bus goes past.

The rest of the year was taken up with completing the Festival application forms, planning applications etc. At the suggestion of the Kesteven Association of Parish Councils the Lincolnshire Road Car Company were approached for a financial contribution. They refused but did offer a prize for a fund-raising event such as a whist drive or a dance.

On the 20th January 1951 the KAPC advised the parish council that our forms had been submitted to the National Association of Parish Councils, but nothing could yet be decided as our architect, nominated by KAPC, had fallen down on the job and had not provided the necessary plans and estimates of costs. It seems that he had also fallen down on all the other projects in the county.

It is obvious that at this point patience snapped and the parish council enquired as to the possibility of going it alone with the project and bypassing the Festival of Britain Scheme. Back came the ever helpful reply from KAPC that yes, we could, BUT in these circumstances the parish council would not be able to make a contribution, there would be difficulty in obtaining a building licence and other local authorities would not be able to contribute to the cost. KAPC hoped that we would continue!

It seems that Potterhanworth's application, without the help of architect Gibson, was finally submitted on the 26th of September 1951, but unfortunately it did not reach London, via the KAPC until after the 30th of September. The cut-off date for the receipt of applications was, of course, the 30th of September! The KAPC were extremely apologetic and bitterly blamed the architect that they had nominated for letting down not only Potterhanworth but every other scheme in the county.

In the time-honoured bad news/good news style of presentation the KAPC then advised that as the scheme was budgeted to cost less than £100, a building licence would not be needed after all. More good news – the regulations had now changed and parish councils could now make contributions to schemes that had not been processed through the Festival of Britain Scheme. Just imagine the

frustration of the Bus Shelter Committee and the Parish Council at this point having wasted almost a year and endured the endless bureaucracy detailed above.

Finally, in November 1951, the all-important letter of approval for the project to proceed was received from Kesteven County Council who granted planning permission. In a long, rambling letter they say that they could not legally give Highway approval to what is technically a “non-statutory obstruction of the highway”. The County Council graciously agreed not to press this point, but if ever the site were required for other purposes, say road widening, the Parish Council/Committee would have to remove it. The County Council also required to be indemnified by a policy of insurance.

Work commenced immediately and at the end of January 1952, Mr. B Roberts, Joiner and Builder of Barff Road, Potterhanworth submitted his account in the sum of £113. 00s. 09d. The man who actually carried out the construction work is alive and well and lived continuously in Potterhanworth until he very recently moved to Branston. He is Mr. Ron Applewhite who lived for the last few years in Fosters Gardens. Ron has more than once told me with a chuckle how the late Theodore Battle drew up one day whilst he was working on the project and said “I’ll give it 18 months”. How wrong can you be!

When the Bus Shelter opened for business it was free of debt. Prior to building commencing, pledges of donations had been made by many of Potterhanworth’s best known and respected residents. The list of pledges still exists, and it is an indication of the integrity of the people involved that the donations listed in the final accounts match exactly with the sums pledged.

A copy of the accounts is shown below:

<u>Receipts</u>			<u>Payments</u>		
<u>1952</u>	<u>Donations</u>	£ s d	<u>1952</u>	<u>Payments</u>	
Feb 04	Mr HM Salter	2 00 00	Mar 25	Mr. B Roberts – A/c	
Feb 07	Mr R Brewer	2 00 00.		for building	113 00 00
Feb 16	Mrs L Vallance	1 00 00	Oct 22	London Liverpool	
Feb 16	Mr. GH Tether	10 00		Globe Ins Co	12 06
Feb 16	Mr. JT Warriner	10 00	Sep 27	Water Tower Committee	
Feb 16	Mr. Geo Smith	10 00	<u>1953</u>	for meeting	02 06
Mar 01	Mr. E Cumiskey	10 00	Feb 05	London Liverpool	
Mar 08	Mr. B Roberts	1 00 00		Globe Ins Co	12 06
Mar 08	Mr. THN Battle	5 00 00	Mar 21	Mr B Roberts-preparing	
Mar 08	Mr. Ernest Jackson	10 00		plate etc in Bus Shelter	11 04 04
Mar 28	Grant from Parish Fund	98 00 00	Dec 12	Water Tower Committee	
Mar 31	Mr. HS Gilliatt	1 00 00		for final meeting	
Mar 31	Mr J Day	10 00		Dec 10 1953	02 06
Oct 25	Proceeds from Whist Drive	9 16 06			
Nov 14	Mr. HM Salter	3 10 00		Balance paid to Parish Council	12 02
<hr/>			<hr/>		
£ 126 06 06			£126 06 06		

There is a final twist in the story of Potterhanworth’s Shelter. You will notice from these accounts that there is no mention in the receipts of any money from the family of the late GM Salter. On the plaque in the shelter however it quite clearly states that “This Bus Shelter was given by the family of

the late GM Salter. How can this be? Well, examination of the accounts shows that after all necessary monies had been collected to pay for the shelter the Salter family got into the act by donating to the Bus Shelter Committee in December 1952, the sum of £113.00.00, exactly the amount charged by Mr. B Roberts to build the shelter. The brutal truth is that when it was received the Committee had no use for it as enough money was already in hand to pay for everything, including mounting the plaque. The Salter donation was rather like the cavalry arriving after the battle had been won. The Bus Shelter Committee in fact paid this exact sum over to the Fund Raising Committee in December 1953, just before its dissolution. The Salter family effectively made a donation to the Fund Raising Committee, and not to the Bus Shelter Committee.

I suspect that good old fashioned deference to “one’s betters”, still prevalent in the 1950s, kicked in and the plaque was worded to include their name, and even worse give the impression that they were the prime funders of the project. In reality it was the hard earned funds collected through dances and whist drives and small donations from many honourable and hard working residents, who at that time would not have found it easy to donate 10 shillings or a pound, that made the whole project possible.

I should stress that no one should doubt the generosity of the Salter family, who I knew well, or their commitment to this Parish. Over the years they gave much to this parish and their public service was second to none, but the Bus Shelter was not their show. The Potterhanworth Fund Raising Committee committed itself to buying the current playing field in February 1953 at a cost of £440, and it could therefore more accurately be said that the Salter family donation covered a quarter of the cost of that project.

The Potterhanworth Bus Shelter Committee was finally wound up on December 15th 1953 when they asked the Parish Council to accept future responsibility for insurance and maintenance. At a meeting of the Parish Council on 20th December 1953 the Parish Council agreed to do this.



Above: Potterhanworth Bus Shelter in 2009 before its makeover.

This article would not be complete without reference to the trees mentioned in the plaque pictured above. The trees referred to are of course the six magnificent limes which stand either side of the Bus Shelter. Neither the Salter Family nor the Bus Shelter Committee can claim any credit for planting these trees.

Prior to the limes being planted there were a number of elm trees on the same strip of land that had become dangerous. At the parish council’s request a company of timber merchants named Godley

and Goulding of Worksop removed the old trees and in August 1950 gave to Potterhanworth Parish Council the princely sum of £32 in payment for the timber. The money was deposited in a special account at the Trustee Savings Bank that was thereafter referred to as “The Tree Fund”. It was from that fund that the money came to plant the limes that in their maturity so beautifully grace the village centre today.

There had been considerable debate about the old elm trees and their replacement prior to them being felled and there is one classic minute that should be mentioned. At the Parish Council meeting held on the 3rd August 1949, under matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, it is stated that “The Parish Councils Association gave the following information regarding the elm trees – The owners are responsible for the removal and for any damage caused.” Following this gem of advice Councillor Brewer proposed, and Councillor Warriner seconded that “when the trees are removed, they should be replaced by younger ones”!!

The tree fund also provided the necessary funds to have some wooden seats fixed into the shelter and to provide a concrete strip between the road and front of the shelter. The seats have long since gone, falling victim to vandalism in the 1960s.

So there we have it. Next time you pass the Bus Shelter, don’t just see it as a rather grey and dated structure, but rather see it as a memorial to the good men and women of Potterhanworth whose dedication and commitment made it all possible. See it also as a visible reminder of a piece of Potterhanworth’s history. The Bus Shelter Committee never did get a grant or contribution from any council, be it parish, district or county. They never got anything either from the Festival of Britain Committee. On the contrary they not only paid for it themselves, along with help from their fellow parishioners in the Parish Fund Committee, but left the sum of 12 shillings and two pence to the Parish council towards future maintenance!

RE WILFORD

Former Parish Councillor and former Clerk to the Parish Council

June 2009

Postscript

Very soon after the above article was published on the Parish Council website in 2009, there was a move to refurbish the bus shelter. I know that my article was very widely read and I wonder whether the article played a part in initiating the action.

The refurbishment vastly improved the bus shelter. An opening was made in the south end wall with a metal grill so that people in the shelter can now see their bus appearing over the top of Church Hill. All of the walls were rendered with smooth concrete to cover up the austere appearance of the old breeze blocks and painted cream. It was also re-roofed with two skylight windows to let in a bit more light.

Inside there now seats again, this time made out of metal which are far less likely to be vandalised. There are also some artworks, including 2 mosaics, to which the pupils of Potterhanworth School contributed. There is also a smart parish notice board and a rubbish bin



Above: Potterhanworth Bus Shelter today after its extensive makeover.

I wonder what those hard working people and fund raisers from the 1950s would make of their bus shelter if they could come back and see it today? I'm sure that they would be delighted to see its bright and modern appearance and be very proud of the legacy they left to our village.

Sadly, there is still no mention of their efforts in the Bus Shelter and I hope that one day this very unjust omission is rectified.

RE WILFORD

December 2023