

THE POTTER HANWORTH SCHOOL 1900 TIME CAPSULE

The “Time Capsule” found in the upper walls of the south-west part, nearest to the main road, of Potter Hanworth school in the summer of 2022 consists of a green glass bottle with an old-fashioned screw cap, containing the mast head from the front page of the “Yorkshire Post”, dated 6 August 1900, and a short hand-written document which records the extension of the original school building and the placing of a name stone in August 1900. The material was found during repairs to the west gable end of the building, some 122 years after it was placed.

To begin, a picture of the message and a transcription are below.



The original school was built in 1855 during the incumbency of the Rev Arthur H. Anson, and was enlarged in 1900 when it was renamed

“The Anson School”.

(Signed)

Samuel B. Bridges,

Rector

6 August 1900

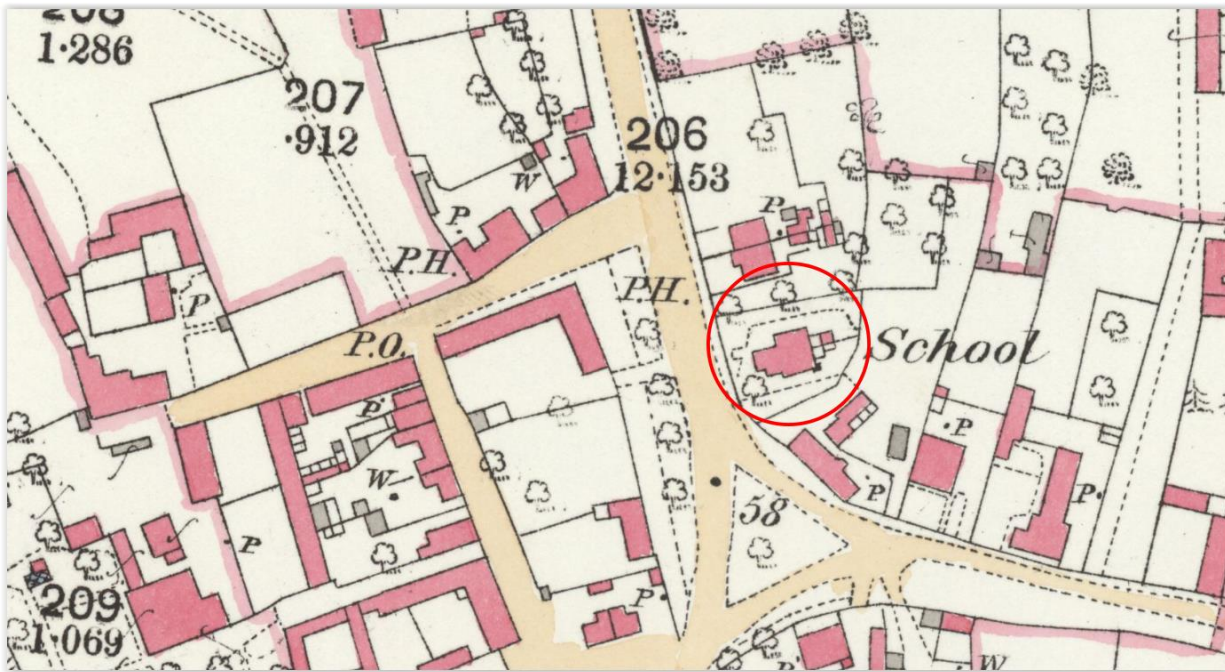
This stone was “well and truly laid” on August 6th 1900 by the Rev S B Bridges, Rector of Potter Hanworth

Samuel B. Bridges		
Fred. G. Battle		Managers present
William Headland		

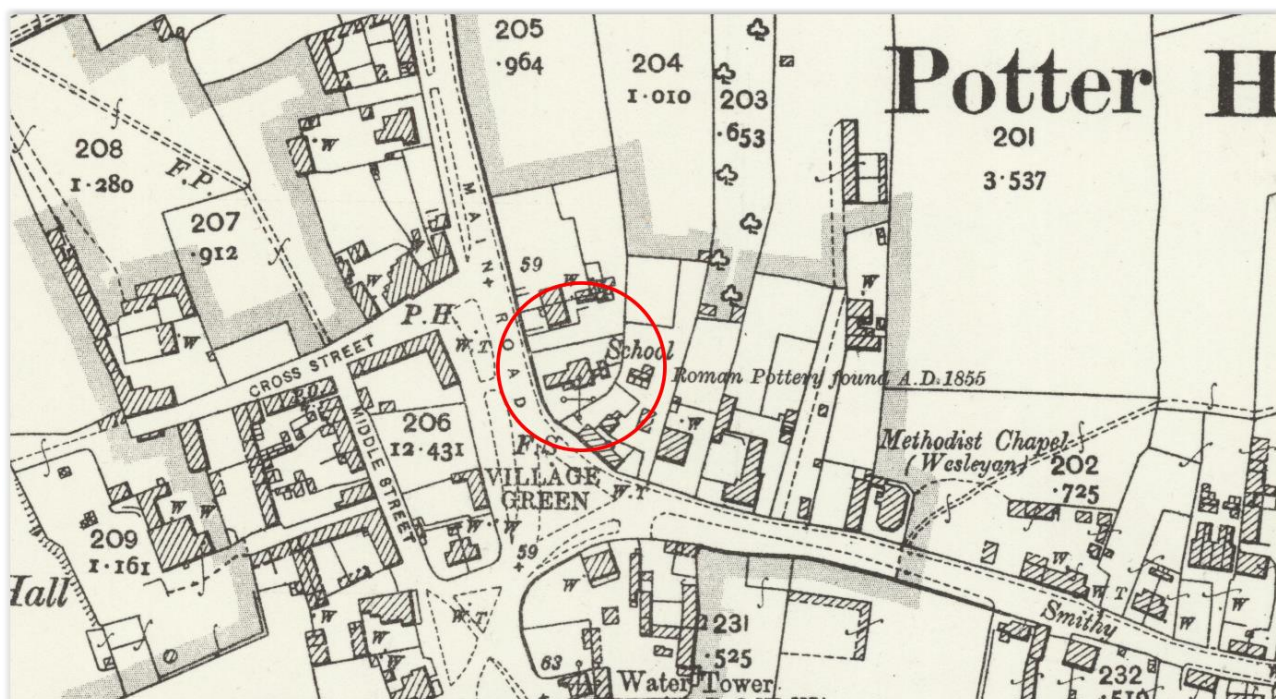
Joseph Bacon	Schoolmaster
George Atkinson	Builder and Parish Clerk
Gideon Sconce	Rectors Guest

To writers’ knowledge, this is the first written proof that the school was indeed extended in 1900. It had previously been thought that the first significant extension to the main building had been made in 1909, for which there is a date stone. It appears that the very weathered name stone, just readable as “The Anson School”, marked and commemorated the first extension. As part of the renovation work in 2022, the weathered stone was replaced with a new version with the same wording.

Careful study of the historical 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps for 1888 and 1905 do indeed show that the western part of the school building increased in length between the two mapping dates, matching both the date of the time capsule and where it was found.



The 1888 map. The original school building of 1855 appears on the map

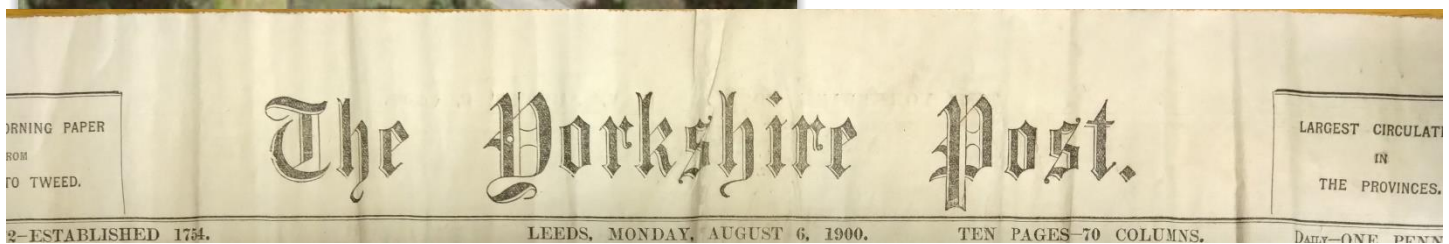


The 1904 map. The western end of the building is definitely longer, and the 1909 extension has yet to be built.



For comparison, the school after the extensions of 2002.

The other paper in the bottle was the heading from the front page of the "Yorkshire Post" for 6th August 1900, presumably the date on which the bottle was sealed into the wall.



The bottle itself appears to be a one-pint mineral water, or possibly beer, bottle. Cast into the glass is:

LUMB AND COMPANY
MAKERS
CASTLEFORD

The stopper is a large-pitch pyramidal screw thread made of Vulcanite with a rubber seal.



The Lumb company of Castleford West Yorkshire, seems to have been active around the 1880s to the 1930s. They were bottle-makers rather than drinks bottlers, and it has not been possible yet to trace whichever company filled the bottle with what was probably a sparkling soft drink, as no label was found.

This picture from 1908 - 09 shows the school with the extension in place. The original name stone, much weathered by 2022, and replaced in the work which brought the bottle to light, can be seen in the gable end.

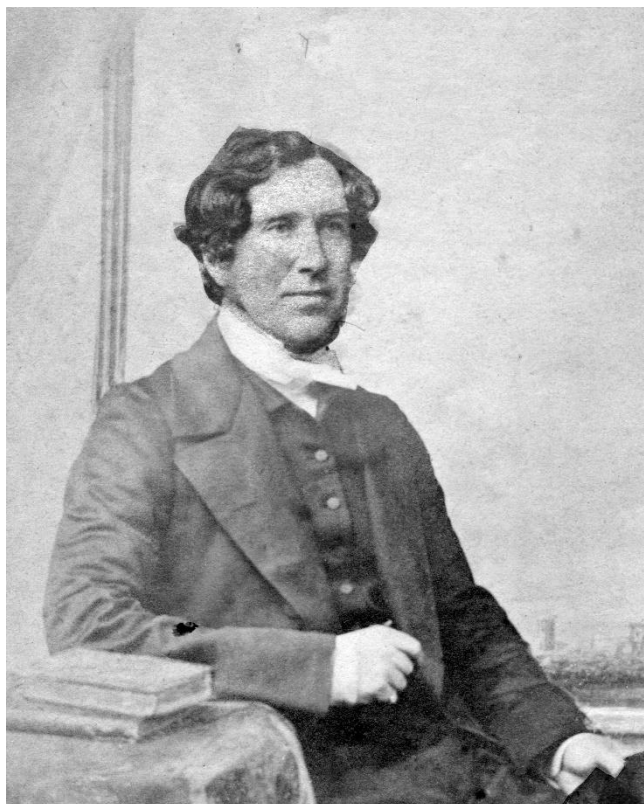


THE PEOPLE NAMED IN THE NOTE

The Rev Arthur H. Anson

Arthur Henry Anson was born in 1817 at Sudbury in Derbyshire. He made his career in the church, into which he followed his father, Frederick Anson via the university of Oxford. The elder Anson rose to become Dean of Chester. Arthur Anson was a cousin of the first Earl of Lichfield. His father was one of the younger brothers of the earls' father, Thomas Anson, who had been created viscount Lichfield in 1806. The son of Thomas Anson, viscount Lichfield, also named Thomas, was created earl of Lichfield in William the fourths' coronation honours list in 1830.

For almost a century, the living of Potter Hanworth had been held in plurality by three successive generations of the Curtois family, all of whom lived at Branston, though a younger member of the family often acted as curate of Potter Hanworth. The last Curtois to hold the livings died on 8th January 1847, and Arthur Anson was instituted to the rectory on 4th May 1847.



In addition to his aristocratic background and family involvement in the church, Arthur Anson had not only considerable wealth, but also connections to royalty. His brother Frederick became a fellow of All Souls Oxford and Canon of Windsor, and followed the older Anson as Rector of Sudbury. His brother George became private secretary to the Prince Consort, making occasional unofficial diplomatic missions on the latter's behalf. As a young, wealthy and energetic man, with connections that Fitzwilliam Darcy himself might have envied, and finding a parish with a poor housing stock, a dilapidated church, no school, no rectory, and no good farmhouses on the glebe lands, Arthur set about dragging the village, kicking and screaming if need be, into the Nineteenth century, along the way providing the missing amenities.

Hanworth:

1848 A new Rectory, in the Victorian Tudor style, complete with stables and buildings for a home farm.

1855 A new school and two cottages adjacent to it, set up to be the bases for smallholdings.

1856 A new church (with the ancient tower retained) in rather a mish-mash of styles, Victorian, but appearing to be older.

1857-58 New farm houses on the glebe lands at the stone pit and in the east fen.

Further projects for better cottages were in train but never built at the Rev Ansons' early death in November 1859.

In 1851, Arthur Anson had married Augusta Theresa Tuffnell, and brought his bride back to the new rectory. The former Miss Tuffnell was herself very well-connected, her father being both an M.P. and a Privy Councillor, and she had relations by marriage who were ministers in the church. Together they had five children, Anne 1852, Hugh 1853, Lucy 1855, Alice 1857 and Arthur (born posthumously) 1860.

The Rev Samuel B. Bridges

Samuel Benjamin Bridges was born in April 1843, to Samuel and Anne Bridges, who were living at Parsons Green in the district of Fulham, which at the time was administratively part of the county of Middlesex, but very much in west London. Samuel Bridges senior was variously described as a painter and a plumber.

The young Bridges seems to have grown up in the Fulham area. Little is known of his schooling, but by 1864, approaching the age of 21, he had become a schoolmaster in Fulham, and on 11th January that year, he married Ann Elizabeth Townshend, also from Fulham, of no given occupation, the daughter of a butler. Miss Townshend was some ten years older than Samuel Bridges.

By 1871, The Bridges family consisted of the married couple and a Samuel, who was six, and two daughters, Lilly who was five, and who was two, and they were living in the school house at Berton Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire.

In the early 1870s disaster struck the Bridges family, for Ann Elizabeth died in the third quarter of 1873. This seems to have brought about a change in Samuel Bridges' life, for by 1881, he had found vocation as a Clerk in Holy Orders, attended Chichester College become a curate in 1877, serving at Lambourne in Berkshire, and furthering his studies, to be ordained in Oxford in 1878. In 1880 he senior curate at Shoreditch and then vicar of Saint Matthews' in 1883.

On 9 January 1878 he had re-married to Elanor Marie Louise Armstrong and in 1881 they were living at 91 Mortimer road Hackney while he was senior curate.

The 1881 census shows Samuel and Elanor as being 37 and 41 respectively. Samuel junior was 16 and working as a copyist in the Post Office, possibly at "Bank" (?)

There is no sign of the younger son, Percy, though he is known to have been born in 1871 and to be still living in 1911, nor of the two girls. What happened to them?

The most intriguing part of the entry in the 1881 census is the visitor to the Bridges household who was recorded as being with them on that day, one Maurice Henry Footman "Solicitors articled clerk, born Ipswich Suffolk, 21 years". This may be a remarkable coincidence and needs to be checked out, but it seems unlikely to be entirely random, considering the part that a Maurice Henry Footman later played in the history of Nocton and Potter Hanworth.

In 1883, Samuel Bridges was granted the living of Saint Matthews' Stepney, where he remained until 1893. At that point he was granted the living of Potter Hanworth, replacing the Rev William Spranger-White. He held the living until he retired in 1910 and went to live in the cathedral close in Lincoln. He died there in October 1914.

Having spent ten years fighting the effects of urban poverty and deprivation in Stepney, whoever decided to appoint Samuel Bridges to Potter Hanworth probably thought they were giving him the reward of an easier, gentler time (and possibly moving a battling nuisance out of Stepney). He promptly started in to improve the lot of his parishioners, now fighting rural poverty and deprivation, pressing for better education facilities, "fighting the corner" of Christs Hospital Endowment at Potter Hanworth against the governors of the Endowment in Lincoln, for more money and facilities for the village school, greater autonomy, and more places for village boys at the school in Lincoln. He also chaired the meetings which initiated the Parish Council in 1893 -94, and while not being a member of the council, often chaired the annual parish meeting. He was an active school governor and helped to forward the village water supply scheme, and was chairman of the villages' Culfrey Charity, which endeavoured to help the poor and the aged.

Mr Frederick G. Battle

Mr Frederick Battle was born in 1856, the sixth child and fourth son of John Richard Battle and Rebecca Battle (nee Scoley).



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John Richard Battle had been born in Faldingworth in 1811, of farming stock. His father died shortly after his birth, and rather than making a career in farming, he took up the other tradition of the family and became an apothecary, gradually transitioning to being a dispensing chemist as times changed during the first half of the Nineteenth century. By the year 1838 at the age of 27 he was working for himself as a chemist in Lincoln. In that year he married Rebecca Scoley in Potter Hanworth. In 1841, they were living in Saint Mary Le Wigford parish in Lincoln, probably “over the shop” of his Chemists business. The business thrived, other shops were opened, partnerships entered into, and John Battle began to play a significant part in Lincoln city politics, eventually becoming a J.P., Mayor, and Alderman. The chemist business eventually expanded into wholesale work and then into manufacturing of pharmaceuticals.



By at the latest 1856 John Battle had taken the lease of the Peacock / Wilson family farming property in Potter Hanworth, possibly through his connection to the Scoley family, who were the previous tenants. He made his home in White Hall, and it is possible that his son Frederick George was born there in 1856.

Again, the family prospered, and John Battle maintained his interests in Lincoln, in the Chemists businesses and in farming. He probably retired from active participation in the Chemists business in the 1870s, and by the late 1880s had more or less handed over the running of the farm to his son Frederick.

John Battle died in 1889 and as a former mayor and alderman was buried in Lincoln. His farming interests were taken over by Frederick George Battle.

Frederick Battle continued to actively run the family farm, and in 1893 he married Eleanor Eliza Newsum of Lincoln. Together they had six children. Frederick Battle was active in village affairs until his death in 1931, serving on the boards of local charities and the Parish Council as well as being a school manager. He continued to build up the farm and turned it into one of the most prominent establishments in Potter Hanworth .

Mr W. S. Fox

William Shearbourn Fox was born on 13th March 1857 in Dunston, the eldest son of a farming family. After attending school in Aubourn he joined the family farm, living at Brook House in Dunston. By 1881 he was managing the farm in conjunction with his father, Mr Francis Fox, and by 1891 he was head of the family and in full charge of the farm. He took the lease of the manor farms and the manor house in Potter Hanworth in 1892.

In 1900 he was 43 years old, unmarried, and the tenant of the Manor House, where he was living with his aged mother and his younger sister. As the principal tenant of Christ's Hospital, he was renting some 700 acres of land across the

parish, making him by far the largest farmer in the village. The land was organised into four main farming units, each worked more or less separately. He also owned land elsewhere.

Mister Fox was a man of considerable account in local affairs. He was chairman of the parish council for the first decade and a half of its' existence. He was active in local politics, as both a county and rural district councillor, and in 1892 he had stood as the liberal candidate in the Kesteven parliamentary constituency. He was decidedly on the "left wing" of the liberal party, and a man of advanced radical ideas for his time. He seems to have firmly believed that the future lay in improving the working conditions, education and the overall position of the working man, and he did all he could to make practical advances in that direction. He spearheaded the installation of the village piped water supply, and also led the village in the provision of modern housing for farm workers. He built eight cottages for use by those working on his own estate, and was active in the provision of the first council houses in the village (and the district) in 1912-13.

Mister Fox was also a leading member of the Methodist Connection, actively supporting the work of the Chapel. In oral testimony passed down to the writer by a brother of one of the servants at the Manor House, it was known that Mr Fox abhorred swearing, but occasionally forgot himself and swore under extreme provocation. The household could be certain that the following weekend, a box of chocolates would be sent to the kitchen for the benefit of the house servants as a mark of apology for Mr Fox's bad language. He was open-handed to all, and helped many people in his employment to better their lot.

Mr Fox married at a relatively late age in 1907, to Miss Rosa Bland of Baston in the Bourne district and raised a family of two daughters and a son. Unfortunately, his son died at the age of two years in 1916. This seems to have greatly affected him and he died on the 19th of April 1917, the final tenant of the manor house before the Christs Hospital estate was broken up and sold.

Mr William Headland

The Headland family were connected with Potter Hanworth and Nocton from the 16th century until the 20th century, and there were Headlands farming in Potter Hanworth from at least 1750. In 1891, William Headland was 34 years old, having been born in 1857. His parents, Henry Newton Headland and Mary Headland were still living in 1891, but William was active in running the family farm, which was based on what is now the west part of Brewers' Yard and the adjacent property of F.G. Battle and sons. The family lived in a traditional-style Lincolnshire farmhouse, long, narrow, of stone and thatch, a development perhaps of the Viking longhouse, which stood on the north side of Cross street at its' western end.

Unfortunately, Mr Headland was outlived by both his parents, for he died in March 1901 at the age of 43. The village lost a good and active man, and his death began the extinction of the Headland family in Potter Hanworth.

Mr George Atkinson

George Atkinson was born in Metherringham in 1839, the son of William and Mary Atkinson. Mr William Atkinson was a carpenter.

In 1851 George was living at home with his parents, but by 1861 at the age of 22, he was living in Kensington in London, lodging with Thomas Bailey, a house builder, who George was probably working for as a joiner. In 1871 he had returned home to Metherringham, having married Miss Mary _____ from Potter Hanworth probably around 1865, and they were living next door to his father and mother on Lincoln Road, Metherringham. George described himself as a joiner, and he and his father were probably working together.

By 1881, George and Mary, together with their daughter Charlotte (born 1878) had moved to Potter Hanworth and were living in what is now known as "The Gingerbread House" on the south side of the village green. George described

himself as a “carpenter” and he was doubtless running his business from the outhouses and yard behind the house. Lodging with the family was Henry Lanes, curate of Potter Hanworth (under the Rev William Spranger-White.)

In 1891 the Atkinson family were still living together in the “Gingerbread House”, though George now described himself as a builder. Sometime beyond this point, Mary Atkinson died, and In 1896 George re- married to Annie Staley of Potter Hanworth. Charlotte eventually married in 1899. In 1901, George and his second wife, Annie were still working and living in Potter Hanworth. He was described as a joiner and builder, and she claimed to have been born in Saint Martins parish, Hereford around 1845. By 1911, George Atkinson was again widowed, but at 72 was still running his joiners and builders business. At the time of the census, his daughter, now Mrs Charlotte Wright, was looking after him and acting as his housekeeper

Mr Atkinson seems to have been a highly intelligent man with great practical skill. He was probably responsible for the extension to the school which brought about the stone-laying ceremony, and he certainly designed the very ingenious scaffolding which was used to place the clock faces on the church tower when the clock was installed in 1899-1900. Alas, which other buildings he was responsible for the care and construction of in Potter Hanworth is not known.



The scaffolding on the church tower for the installation of the clock , circa 1899. The Rev. Samuel Bridges is on the left. Mr George Atkinson is standing on the scaffolding at the right below the clock face, holding a hammer.

Mr Joseph Bacon

Joseph Bacon was born in 1837 in Cambridgeshire, probably in Ashdon. His parents were Joshua and Mary. Joshua was an agricultural labourer, who sometimes spelled his surname “Baken”. By 1851, at 14 Joseph had joined his father in farm work, but he obviously aspired to higher things, for he must have gained the training and experience to become perhaps first a student teacher, then an assistant teacher. By 1855 he had married his wife, the former Miss Mary Ann Welton (or Wilton), from Saxmundham, and he and she moved around the country, as he gained in experience and moved up in the teaching profession. In the early 1860s, they were in South Creak in Norfolk, and then from the middle of the decade until the late Seventies they were living and working in Kirklington, near Bedale in North Yorksire. Their final move was to Potter Hanworth, probably around 1878, where Joseph became schoolmaster at the Anson school. He remained in charge of the school until 1904. Along the way he and Mary Ann produced a family of four daughters, some of whom became assistant teachers in their fathers’ school. While in Potter Hanworth, the family lived in the house at the corner of Cross street and Main road which was originally a farm house, and was subsequently divided into two dwellings, now known as “Potters’ Wallop” and “Chequers Cottage”.

Joseph Bacon was very much a fixture in Potter Hanworth, spending more than 25 years there. As such he was both loved and hated by a good many members of the population. There are no major anecdotes about him, but he obviously approved of the extension to his school, which would allow for a growing number of scholars to be accommodated. He died while still working as schoolmaster in the spring of 1904.

Mr Gideon Sconce

Mr Sconce was probably of Scottish birth, from the area of Stirling. He was 65 years old in 1900, a retired civil servant who had worked for the Board of Trade, most likely in a legal capacity. He and his family had lived in Kensington, London for at least the previous two decades. He probably met the Rev Bridges when they were both in London and struck up a friendship with him. Presumably he was in Potter Hanworth in 1900 for a holiday visit in the country, away from the noise and heat of London in the summer. He died in 1911.

Conclusion

The capsule provides us with a window into events almost a century and a quarter ago, and links us through the building to the people and events of that time, showing us how the school was administered in those days. It is worth pointing out that when the north-west gable of the school was repaired and extended around 2010, a similar capsule was found behind the 1909 date stone . It would be interesting to tell the story of that capsule as well.