

PITSTONE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20 MAY 1999 AT IVINGHOE TOWN HALL

Present:

Mike Sear (Chairman) Bob Rayner (Vice Chairman) John Wallis (Treasurer)
Brenda Grace (Secretary) Norman Groom (Farm Museum Manager) David Lindsey (Watermill
Manager) Sue Lipscomb (Programme Secretary) Val Rayner (Crafts Co-ordinator) Jean de
Selincourt (Publicity Secretary) Jeannette Wallis (Trading Secretary) Gill Arney (Archivist) and
nineteen members.

Apologies were received from:

Mike Malone, Les Laing, Mike and Jean Morris, Don Levy, David Goseltine, Roy Curzon,
Jeff Hawkins, Mary Tyrrell, Bernard Banfield and Greta Brown.

Minutes of the 1998 AGM were agreed and signed

Matters arising

John Wallis (Treasurer) announced that the changes to subscription charges which was
proposed at the 1998 AGM have now been agreed and they took effect on 1 April 1999 they
are:-

Senior Citizens	£4.00
Family membership	£9.00
Ordinary members	£6.00
Junior members	£4.00

Chairman's Report - Mike Sear

The Society's Annual General Meeting has come round again, and as the Society continues it
is difficult to find something different to report. During the past year the Society has again
continued to progress in all its various activities. As you may already know a founder
member, Tom Owen died on the 4 January, a number of us attended his funeral which was
held at Cheddington Methodist Church. Tom had been involved with many projects over the
years and also was one of the team who restored Pitstone Windmill in 1963.

I will as usual begin my review of the Society's activities with our monthly meetings. Sue
Lipscomb has kept us supplied with interesting and entertaining speakers during the past
year. There is always a very good attendance for our meetings with many non-members
coming along after seeing our published programme. We had a particularly large attendance
at the March meeting at which the subject was Straw Plait. I am sure Sue would be extremely
pleased if anyone could suggest speakers for future meetings. Sue will talk about the past
year in detail later in her report.

At this stage I would also like to thank the ladies who provide the refreshments at our
meetings, in particular Mary Tyrrell and Mary Mountain, their help is not taken for granted and
these refreshments are very much appreciated by everybody and make an enjoyable finish to
the evening.

David Lindsey continues to work extremely hard on behalf of Ford End Watermill which is
being maintained to the usual high standard. Some additional specialist work has been
carried out this year to enable the mill to be run satisfactorily and safely. It is obvious that
without his dedication along with his helpers, the Watermill would not be in such a good
condition. David will describe progress in more detail in his report later.

You will recall that I asked at the last AGM if anybody could take on the production of our Newsletter but unfortunately no-one has come forward. I have produced some during the past year, and the last one was compiled by Norman Groom. I would again make a plea for someone to help out with this very important aspect of the Society. This is your newsletter and it helps to keep the Society together and is the only way to keep members informed of what is going on.

The largest section of the Society's activities is of course the Pitstone Green Farm Museum. A tremendous amount of work has again been undertaken during the past year by many people encouraged by Norman Groom our Museum Manager who continues to spend a large amount of his time at the Museum and also much time at home on Museum related work. The faithful workforce at the museum continue to attend with one of two additions, some have taken on specific projects. Norman will give you more details in his report but the museum continues to improve visually which is one of the essential requirements to attract visitors on whom we rely for our income and continued existence.

Museum open days were again successful as during the past year. We now have 'Family Fun and Craft Days' four times a year, and the Museum Only openings on each Bank Holiday Monday. Any suggestions you may have to attract more people, such as special events etc., will be most welcome. It would be an advantage to be able to open more often but the problem is as usual to find people who are willing to help on these days.

It would be excellent if the Society could establish a substantial list of people willing to undertake wardening duties at both the Museum and Watermill. If this could be obtained, any one person would not be called upon too often. Has anyone any suggestions?

We rely totally on the income from general visitors, school and special parties to the Watermill and Farm Museum for our continued existence. So please if anyone could help, do let me know.

A tremendous amount of work has again this year been carried out on a voluntary basis by a number of people doing many and varied jobs. It would be wrong of me to pick out individuals, but they know who they are, and the Society in all its various aspects could not function without them. I would also like to thank the Officers, members of the Executive and Sub Committees, and all Society members who have helped in many different ways towards the running of our organisation.

Finally thank you for coming tonight and for supporting these monthly meetings and social activities. I trust the Society will continue to flourish in the forthcoming year.

Treasurer's Report - John Wynne Wallis

The cost of the Mills Party this year was transferred from the General Fund to the Watermill.

Income from Monthly Meetings was up from £109 to £186.

Advertising last year was up by 42%.

Museum Insurance was up from £666 to £719 as we have taken on a few more buildings.

It was proposed by Kit Kite and seconded by David Lindsey that the accounts be accepted and this was carried.

The Chairman thanked John for all the work he had done for the Society during the year.

Farm Museum Report - Norman Groom

One of my memories of the 1998 Open Season was the atrocious weather we had for the majority of the Special Open Days. On all three days that we had open in 1998, the weather

was bad and attendance's well down. However, the year was saved by the rearrangements we had made with the extra August day being a great success. All the Bank Holidays were good and with the help of the new museum shop, final admissions and sales showed an increase over 1997.

Our band of helpers again came up trumps running the many activities that we now have. The plant stall is a regular fund raiser as are the secondhand book sales. The museum shop has now been in operation just about 12 months and has proved a great asset. School parties, although somewhat down this year still provided a welcome income.

Following on from our Treasurer's Report the museum was in the red last year by some £450 however this has come down from £2300 the previous year, both deficits being due to the large amount of reconstruction and restoration being carried out at the museum.

David Goseltine's team have been hard at work again. The two brick grain bins, that were piled high with rubbish and machinery spares, have been converted into what can only be described as a magnificent science room or rooms, now fully stocked and operational. The two rooms have had a false ceiling fitted and are at least equal or even superior to the standard of the museum shop, completed last year.

During the last part of 1998 the team have virtually rebuilt and re-roofed the lean-to at the rear of the mill barn that once housed a portable steam engine that was used for driving the two stone mills. Their 'piece de resistance' however must be the new refreshment area, with the work being carried out within a period of only a few weeks.

Not only do the work force put in many hours during each week, but we have one or two experts good at acquiring surplus equipment and materials. We have had a quantity of heavy steel angle that has provided supports for the science room ceiling as well as other uses, several quality display cabinets with interior lighting, a large quantity of edged and laminated work surfaces that have been used in the science room and refreshment area as well as kitchen wall cupboards, electric heaters, timber and ply sheets that have saved the society many hundreds of pounds.

Our volunteer numbers have also increased in recent months. Peter Keeley, a conscript from the Beds and Bucks Engine Club has joined us on a regular basis and brought along two of his friends Michael Bickerton and Alan Easter who are busy working on the Rack Saw which we hope to have in operation later this year. Malcolm Lee joined us during 1998 and has changed the brush shop from a jumble of unknown items into a working brush shop. He can now demonstrate to visitors some of the operations involved in brush making, on the open days. Gill Arney our Archivist has a new assistant but I will let Gill give you her own report.

We already have had two ordinary open days this year, one on Easter Monday and one on the first Bank Holiday in May. The new refreshment area as well as the museum shop were operational on both these days. Both were very successful, especially Easter Monday, when our income was well over two hundreds pounds on that day, exceeding that of some of the 1998 Special Open Days.

We are now opening the museum up at 11.00am on all the Open Days as we find that people turn up expecting to find the museum open all day. We are now looking into the possibility of having larger roadside signs advertising that refreshments are available and getting a larger number of signs around the locality.

A questionnaire given to visitors on the last Bank Holiday Monday indicated that 90% of the visitors found out about the museum via the road signs.

In this brief report I have not been able to cover everyone's activity during the working days, the open days and behind the scenes, however I would like to thank all those members who have contributed their time and effort, without your help the museum would be unable to continue.

The most important part of the museum is of course the collection, its display, restoration and organisation and I will now hand over to Gill to cover this important subject.

Report by our Archivist - Gillian Arney

We now have a new computer; this is much faster than the old one. We have also acquired a new volunteer Kit Kite who enjoys using it!

Over the winter Jean de Selincourt and I have revamped the stable.

Mike and Jean Morris have rearranged the Brewery display in the Microcosm.

The plumbers shop is now well on the way towards rearrangement.

We have given major photographic help for the Pitstone Millennium Book 'Pitstone 2000', which will be published in the Autumn.

Following Gill Arney's report Sylvia Andrews brought up the subject of clarification of the 'No Smoking' areas around the Farm. Sylvia also said it was thought that at the new refreshment area the weatherboarding needs to be checked, as someone on one Open Day did get a splinter in her finger! It was said this area would be checked.

Norman replied regarding the No Smoking area and said that basically we really needed to say the whole area is a 'No Smoking Zone'. A note regarding this to go in the Newsletter to state that both the Farm Museum and Watermill are 'No smoking areas'.

Programme Secretary's Report - Sue Lipscomb

We have had a very varied and interesting range of speakers and visits during the last year. Exactly a year ago Gill Arney puzzled us with a range of artifacts from the Museum. This was followed in the summer months by Graham Atkins conducted tour of the College Lake Nature Reserve, our Cheese and Wine evening at the Museum and Mary Craig's tour of the King's Head In Aylesbury.

Following these events we have had a series of talks in the Ivinghoe Town Hall. September saw Ron Kitchener with his collection of walking sticks, then John Woolley recounted his first hand experience of the Great Train Robbery and Eve McLaughlin became Dame Gerard to talk about herbal remedies. Our December meeting saw Jim Andrews reviewing the engines at Pitstone Green Farm Museum and Joan Ward talked about her collection of buttons in January. Since then we have heard Alison Smith on the Modern Census, Laslo Grof and the local straw plait industry and George Lamb talking about the Civil War in Buckinghamshire.

I have found all these events fascinating but have to wonder whether our members feel the same when I look at the members present for each talk. If I exclude the talk about the Great Train Robbery which attracted an audience of 39 and the talk about Straw Plait when there was a record 46 people present, then the average attendance has been 19.

Could it be that my choice of speakers is not to the taste of the main body of members? I would welcome, as always, suggestions for my programme for the year 2000.

Finally, the Committee recently decided that accounts of our talks should only appear in the newsletter if they are of local interest, so members who miss talks will not be able to 'catch up' on them later.

Sue also reminded people about the trip in September to Hampton Court.

Norman Groom said that he thought we should use the Farm Museum area more, perhaps to use the Barn to hold another event there next year.

Watermill Report - David Lindsey

The 1997 Report expressed the hope, that 1998 might be a change for the better - this has happened, as we will see.

Propose to follow same format as last year.

1. 1998 Visitor Season

Unlike 1997 which began slowly and did not really pick up, 1998 made a good start and maintained the improvement to record the best year ever.

(1) Sundays and Bank Holidays

Twenty eight 'openings' including Easter Monday and National Mills Day drew 1475 visitors - 50% increase on 1997. Surprisingly, National Mills Day was about the same (120-126)

Two highlights were the : May Spring Bank Holiday with 152 and

August Bank Holiday with 185 - a record.

Average per opening : 52.7 visitors.

(2) Adult Parties : 93 visitors in three parties only, including Chiltern Society (C.S.) Historic Works and Buildings Group (Milling demonstration).

(3) School Parties : 2055 children and adults = 53% increase on 1997 of whom 823 (40%) came from Dell Farm and 223 (11%) from Chiltern Study Centre.

(4) Special Openings

National Heritage Day (no charge) - 71.

National Architects Week (all day in November!) - just 3.

(5) Sales : gross takings (excluding flour) up 30% to £530 (last year, also up 18%).

(6) Summary - an excellent year : the envy of other attractions, very rewarding. Overall increase in visitor numbers was 52%

(7) 1999 : If 1998 got off to a good start (+ 33%) 1999 has begun even better + 47% on 1998.

2. Helpers

(1) Repairs/Maintenance etc., : Now three with an occasional fourth.

Also help from Malcolm Lee (Runner stone 'sweep')

Barry Darkins (Bell rope)

Norman Groom (Eye cone for runner stone)

Ron Ashurst (bell bracket) - also displayed an engine and portable mill on National Mills Day.

(2) Sundays and Bank Holidays : 28 plus the four 'maintenance' volunteers: reliable core but now need more.

(3) School parties : mostly done by B Wright with help from John Wallis. 'B' is not getting any younger, so needs more assistance. Recruitment drive : article published in four parish newsletters/magazines:- 'Ivinghoe Beacon', 'Focus' 'Pitstone Parish Post' and 'Aldbury Outlook'.

Result : three new volunteers (two non society members). They have now been through 'training' session and 'inducted' by 'B'; they have begun work.

3. Milling : Always very popular; flour in great demand. Eight demonstrations

(including C.S.) producing 246 bags flour (369Kg = approximately 800lbs)

Sold for £184.50 making a handsome surplus. Wheat difficult to mill.

4. Repairs, Restoration, Maintenance etc.,

(1) Alan Stoyal with 45 years experience of mills has been appointed as technical adviser. Registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission requires us to have a Curatorial Adviser, but our adviser's expertise does not extend to mills and milling. Alan Stoyal will complement her. He has been very helpful.

(2) Routine

New sleepers for old bridge;
 Mock sheepwash chute simulating the one on the 1920's photograph;
 Burr stone spindle bearing cleaned and regreased and spindle re-aligned;
 Crown wheel cogs packed (shims);
 Broken wheelhouse roof support replaced;
 Bolts and plates fitted to arrest shakes in horizontal hurst frame timbers; Ventilating panels fitted to stone case covers;
 Woodworm treatment;
 Warfare on rats and mice!

(3) Major

(i) French burr stones have been dressed at a cost of £200, but this amount has been reimbursed by a donation from the Ivinghoe Entertainment's Committee.

(ii) The spurwheel has been recogged at a cost of £1200. This work was undertaken instead of repairs to the hurst frame (see 1998 AGM Minutes) because the cogs had been badly damaged in the past and were showing signs of considerable wear. They had been in use for nearly 100 years and there was serious risk that they might fail when milling. A grant of £1138 was obtained from the PRISM fund (administered by the Science Museum on behalf of the Museums and Galleries Commission) which means that the actual cost to the Society was only £68! A condition attached to the grant is that the Society must sign a new lease for at least 25 years after 2004, otherwise the money will have to be repaid (see 8(1)).

5. Disposal

Stone crane from Dorset has been donated to Pann Mill, High Wycombe. 'Brigden' assessment showed that it had not been used at Ford End and could not really be used, so, in accordance with 'Collection and Disposal Policy', we could dispose of it.

6. Publicity : SurveySummary of 1998 Visitor Survey results:-

Survey covered almost 60% of all visitors;
 44% came as result of communication e.g. road signs, sent by farm museum, windmill or youth hostel; relatives, friends, after school visit etc., (1993 - figure was 70%) 56% came as a result of publicity, e.g., leaflets, guides, newspaper adverts or articles (1993 - figure was 30%)

7. Thanks most sincerely to all who have helped at the mill during this successful year - the Sunday and Bank Holiday volunteers; B Wright and his assistants for school parties and especially John Wallis, Bob Simpson and Patrick and Mervyn Sellick. Also Barry Darkins, Norman Groom, Ron Ashurst and Malcolm Lee for various items previously mentioned.

8. The Future

(1) The Lease - expires 2004.

Informal discussions held with Richard Jellis and Paul (son) who were 'well disposed' to renewing the lease for a further 25 years, but do not wish to begin discussions until nearer the time.

9. Recognition

The value and importance of Ford End Watermill is now well recognised in the milling world. No excuse is made for quoting from the letter of one of the millwrights tendering for the spurwheel recogging:-

"Your mill is delightful - a real treasure of local history and a most important example now quite rare - of a vernacular country mill which has survived the rigours of change in recent year. In my opinion, this is a very well presented mill. Every support possible should be given to your Society to maintain this mill in order that present and future generations can continue to enjoy this wonderful example of local history."

Following David Lindsey's report, a member, Andrew Gould expressed his thanks on behalf of the Society to David for all his work at the Watermill.

Publicity Secretary's Report - Jean de Selincourt

We are steadily finding more outlets for our leaflets, which are completely new for this season. Designed by Mike Sear with BO Wright's drawings, they are stiffer and the correct size for most tourist leaflet racks. For the present season they are in more Herts libraries now, especially in the Watford area and we have added the Watford Observer to the local newspapers 'What's on' Diaries (now 11 in total) as we feel this heavily populated area must contain plenty of potential visitors.

We continue to supply leaflets to all local Tourist Information Centres and a large number of other tourist attractions. Several members are making sure leaflets and posters are around and about in their own villages - this is very helpful and we thank them. We are making use of the information board in Tring Tesco.

Press releases are always worth doing and we had press photographers at all the Farm Special Days in 1998 - even the wet one!

We continue to pay for our entries in the annual Aylesbury Vale Visitors' Guide and also for Farm Museum entries in 'Old Glory' magazine. We shall try smaller - hence cheaper - boxed advertisements in the local press for our Family Fun and Craft Days this year. We have free entries in more than a dozen other tourist leaflets and 'country' magazines.

David Lindsey ran a second survey last season at the Watermill and it has been extremely useful analysing how visitors had heard about it - local papers are more productive than we expected, and the roadside signs on the day are hugely effective. We are doing a similar survey at the Farm Museum this year. We really do need to know the cost-effectiveness of our advertising - it has to bring in more in entrance fees than it costs!

Details of the Farm Museum and Watermill are on an increasing number of Websites - the most recent of course being the Ivinghoe and Pitstone website.

All the above is a fairly straightforward routine, but I am afraid that I can only continue as Publicity Secretary until next year's AGM. Other commitments have been increasing, and I did only agree to take it on when the then Publicity Secretary was finding it too difficult to fit in with her own pressing family commitments. I would of course be happy to work in tandem for a while with a new volunteer.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

		<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded by</u>
<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Mike Sear</u>	John Wallis	Sylvia Andrews
<u>Vice Chairman</u>	<u>Bob Rayner</u>	John Greenwell	Jean de Selincourt
<u>Treasurer</u>	<u>John Wallis</u>	Mike Sear	David Lindsey
<u>Secretary</u>	<u>Brenda Grace</u>	Bob Rayner	Jean de Selincourt

The rest of the Officers and Committee were voted en bloc.
Proposed by Mary Mountain and seconded by Don Brooks and carried.

Farm Museum Manager**Norman Groom****Watermill Manager****David Lindsey****Programme Secretary****Sue Lipscomb****Crafts Coordinator****Val Rayner****Publicity Secretary****Jean de Selincourt****Trading Secretary****Jeannette Wallis****Archivist****Gillian Arney**

During the year Corral McCormack, our Membership Secretary said she was unable to attend Committee Meetings due to family commitments. Corral will still be prepared to hold this post, but due to the vacancy, our Archivist Gillian Arney has now accepted to be on the Committee.

Independent Examiner**David Hardwicke**

Proposed by Gillian Arney
Seconded by Norman Groom

Any other business

1. Val Rayner brought up the subject of refreshment tickets to crafts people. It was proposed to let them have Tea/Coffee/Squash without charge, but they have to pay for rolls or scones in future.

2. It was brought to the notice of the members that there is concern about the cost of printing and posting of AGM Minutes to all members.

It was proposed in future to send the Chairman's Report plus Notice to Members (Agenda) and Nominations for posts. Copies of the Minutes will be available at the AGM, but If members need a copy in advance they would have to telephone the Secretary. Mr Walls proposed Norman Groom seconded and this was carried.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Following the A.G.M. we had short talks by some of our members, John Greenwell spoke about 'How War came to our Village', followed by a talk by David Lindsey 'Do Clocks have a mind of their own?' followed by Andrew Gould talking about The First World War and Ivinghoe and Pitstone Cricket Club.