

PITSTONE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 17 MAY 2001 IN THE NEW COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE MILLENNIUM EXTENSION AT PITSTONE MEMORIAL HALL

Present

Bob Rayner (Vice Chairman) John Wallis (Treasurer) Brenda Grace (Secretary) Norman Groom (Museum Manager) David Lindsey (Watermill Manager) Jeannette Wallis (Trading Secretary) Val Rayner (Craft co-ordinator) Anne Ball (Publicity Secretary) Gillian Arney (Archivist) and twenty four members.

Apologies received from:-

Mike Sear (Chairman and Trustee) Sue Lipscomb (Programme Secretary) Corral McCormack (Membership Secretary) David Goseltine (Trustee), Geoffrey and Joan Legge, Helen Hickson, Peter Keeley and B. Wright.

Minutes of the 2000 A.G.M. were agreed and signed.

Matters arising

No matters arising

Vice Chairman's Report - Bob Rayner

As most of you will know Mike Sear our Chairman has been incapacitated by a Stroke. He finds it very frustrating not being able to carry on his hard work as Chairman for the society, but has agreed to carry on as a Trustee, and if elected at this meeting as Vice Chairman. We all wish him well and hope he is soon back to his old form. As Vice Chairman, I am giving the Chairman's report to the best of my ability, which I am afraid will not be up to Mike's high standard.

The registration of the Museum is at a standstill at present, as we have sent in the documents, but have as yet received no reply. The committee has suggested that our new name will be Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society or PIMS for short, if agreed by this meeting.

The Museum is looking very good at the moment, the exhibits are improving all the time, due to the hard work of Norman and his merry men. The Watermill at Ford End, Ivinghoe is still looking good but is taking up a lot of David Lindsey's time. Preliminary negotiations are underway for the renewal of the lease on the watermill.

Helen Hickson and her helpers are going very well with the refreshments on Family Fun Days, but more helpers are always warmly welcomed by this friendly food army. Jeannette Wallis is doing a grand job with the shop, while Gillian Arney our Archivist is keeping the office in order as well as the men on Tuesdays! I would like to thank her for the excellent work she also does editing the newsletter. The Morris Dancers and Crafts people for Family Fun Days are organised by Val Rayner. If any one has a craft they wish to demonstrate please speak to her.

Brenda Grace our Secretary does a magnificent job as well as providing refreshments for parties and non working Open Days. Our publicity is capably dealt with by Anne Ball, and equally efficient is our programme secretary Sue Lipscomb who has organised an extremely interesting programme of outings and speakers for our enjoyment. I am pleased to say that attendance's this year have been improving, please keep coming!

John Wallis wears many hats in serving the society, chiefly as Treasurer balancing the books as well as organising school visits.

On behalf of the Society I would like to thank all those named and the many others I have not mentioned for their enthusiasm and hard work, also especially the ladies who do the tea and biscuits at our monthly meetings and not forgetting the Trustees, without all of the helpers, the Society could not function.

Treasurer's Report - John Wallis

Total funds now stand at £20,978 divided between General Fund £1622, Museum £5484, Trading £3773 and Watermill £10,099.

General Fund

The photocopier

Net income of £72 has made a considerable saving on copy printing costs of £59 last year.

Monthly meeting income has increased by £75, but so too has the cost of hiring speakers also up by £75. This seems to be the trend now for all societies. The standard of talks has been very good generally. Miscellaneous expenses include the £620 paid for a computer to maintain our museum collection records, which run into thousands.

Membership income fluctuates wildly because apart from non-renewals many seem to pay in arrears!

Museum Fund

Admissions £2645. Although we spent £63 less on advertising, admission income was up by £604. Favourable weather on the days we were open must have contributed to this increase. Donations of £2560 include £2125 from film and television companies for the hire of artefacts.

Insurance NFU £542 (down by £165). We received a no claims bonus this year for the first time. However, we may lose this next year following a claim made for an injury to a seven year old boy during a school party visit three years ago.

Museum sales £529 transfer this year 100% because adequate funds remain in the Trading fund to cover future stock purchases.

Trading Fund

Most of our sales of souvenirs are made at the YHA when schools are staying there (sometimes to schools that are not even booked to visit the museum and watermill). The second hand books and the plant stall do well when the museum is open and sales have enhanced the shop. A new postcard of the watermill stone floor is now on sale and since it has cost 10.16p to produce we have decided to sell all our coloured postcards for 15p. The sale of the new tape measure key rings has been very disappointing. The price of £1.40 may have to be reduced.

Watermill Fund Admissions were down by £639 due in part by the reduced openings, but more especially by the foot and mouth epidemic, which forced the closure of the mill for the first three months of 2001, when normally many school parties visit the mill. However, the reduction in admission income was offset by the £266 less spent on advertising.

Bob Rayner asked for a proposal to adopt the Treasurer's Accounts and Report. Gillian Arney proposed and John Davis seconded and they were adopted. John was thanked for his work as Treasurer.

Museum Report - Norman Groom

Every year our team of volunteers' manage to raise the quality of the museum in the eyes of the public and this last season has been no exception, in previous years this has resulted in a deficit due to the amount of money that we have ploughed back into the museum but this time we have made a considerable profit. Quite a portion of this was due to a filming contract in which we hired out equipment for filming on Ivinghoe Beacon. It did result in a smashed cast iron wheel for our potato spinner but as one of our Engine Club conscripts, Peter Keeley carried out the machining on the wheel that we had to have cast, we gained financially over and above the basic hire charge.

The catering, museum shop, plant stall, tractor rides, craft stalls and donations from the Potters Guild, helped to boost our income on the Craft and Family Fun Days and the forms of advertising helped to build up our visitor numbers.

We are still looking for help with the catering, in particular someone who could help or take-over with some of the organisation.

We only had two projects planned this last closed season, these being to complete the layout of the Black Shed and then work on the new meeting room. The weather was the worst I have known for a closed season and the new meeting room was not yet available, resulting in a change of projects.

In the last week or two the Black Shed project has moved fast and we will hopefully finish most of it before the first Sunday opening. We now have limited access to the new meeting room, sufficient however to keep the team busy. We are trying to retain many of the features of the room including the manger, wooden ceiling beams, doors and windows but also ensuring it is clean and comfortable for temporary exhibitions, school parties and a meeting room. There still remains about a third of the room for Jeff Hawkins to clear and it is unlikely that the room will now be completed before the 2002 open season. The team are at the moment working on Jeff's new barn, outside the museum site, in order to provide Jeff with additional storage area.

Lots of other projects have been completed. We now have an electrically driven mechanical man operating one of the Winnowers, quite something to see when it is going. Several other exhibits including a chaff cutter and knife cleaner have been stripped, painted and rebuilt. Jeff has a new gate painted in Ashridge Red opposite his house and his clock has been repaired and the dials restored.

I have spent several weeks covering the ceiling of the science room with polystyrene, as the condensation falling from the roof onto the false ceiling resulted in the ceiling to be covered in black mould. One of the science rooms that contains my own collection of W.W.II. military aircraft equipment has just received a new exhibit in the form of a full size replica of a section of a Lancaster Bomber which hopefully will bring in more visitors.

Another member of the Beds and Bucks Engine Club, a retired plumber has joined our Tuesday team. Maurice Wingrove has also carried out demonstrations of his trade on the last two open days.

Members of the model Railway Club the 3 mm Society - Chiltern Group are rebuilding their layout. I have had a sneak preview, it is quite impressive and well worth a look at the next time you are at the museum. It should be ready for the public by the first opening day in June.

With the help of Don Levy, one of our Trustees, we managed to overcome the problems relating to the Foot and Mouth restrictions. Possibly due to the fact there was little else open on Easter Monday and the first Bank Holiday Monday in May, we had the best two Monday opening days I have known. This was almost up to the level of the Craft and Family Days.

I did put out almost double the number of road signs however and this may have helped. My request in the last newsletter for others to put our road signs brought no response, except from Mike and Jean Morris, who put one near their home in Cheddington Road Pitstone. They already do a lot for the museum.

Re-registration

The Museum (Norman Groom) and the Watermill (David Lindsey) has taken about 5 months to complete and at present this is in the hands of South East Museums Agency.

Report by our Archivist - Gillian Arney

We are currently working our way around cataloguing the museum. At the moment we are in the Great Barn. At present not many new items are being accepted into the Museum.

At the Museum 2000 items have been catalogued. There will be 3000 before we finish. I would like to thank Kitt Kite for help with this.

We now have three computers, but are at present bullying the Treasurer for a Scanner!

I have to thank Mike and Jean Morris for their help and particularly Mike for all the laminating of labels he has done.

Programme - Sue Lipscomb

Sue was unable to be at the meeting, her report read as follows:-

Since our last A.G.M. we have had a variety of subjects covered in our talks. Those which received most support from our membership were Andrew Gould's talk on Cricket (32 present), Don Brooks' talk on Geology

(30 present) and Richard Waller's talk on the Aylesbury Duck (25 present). I am truly delighted that two of our own members were so well supported and do encourage any members out there to 'have a go'. I have performed my usual analysis of the attendance figures and have found that we had an average attendance of twenty four, which is seven more than the figure last year and four more than the year before. This is really heartening news; which could mean that I am finally responding to your wishes!!

It is significant that the two meetings that I organised that were not in the Ivinghoe Town Hall fared very differently in their level of support. The walk around Weston Turville in June 2000 received the support of only six members (plus two of my friends that I brought along in a moment of panic!). However the Cheese and Wine held at the Museum in July was a resounding success with 40 people attending and as a result of this I shall endeavour to make it a regular annual occasion of our Society.

I do hope that the committee's decision to use the Memorial Hall in Pitstone for forthcoming meetings will not have a detrimental effect on our attendance. We have also decided to run a raffle at our meetings, starting with the Cheese and Wine in July. I would be most grateful for any raffle prizes you feel you can contribute for that evening.

Finally, I do respond to members suggestions, regarding forthcoming events, so please, please do tell me what you want.

Watermill Report - David Lindsey

1. 2000 Visitor Season

- (1) General Public : restricted to five openings (four bank holidays and National Mills Day) which drew 494 visitors (compared with 540 for the same days in 1999). There were 147 on Mills Day which was above the average.
- (2) There were three Adult Parties.
- (3) School Parties : 2285 children and adults (38% more than 1999) came to the mill, of whom 987 (43%) were from Dell Farm, Whipsnade and 365 (16%) from the Chiltern Study Centre.
- (4) Sales : Gross takings (excluding flour) were obviously down because of the restricted openings : £157 (£403 in 1999) which is not too bad an achievement.

2. Milling

- (1) Two milling demonstrations which produced 80 1½ kg bags of flour which sold for £64. It is very gratifying that the mill's flour is always in great demand.
- (2) 1/2 tonne of Hereward wheat for the 2001/2002 seasons was winnowed i.e. cleared of chaff, stalks, weed seeds etc., using a winnower at the Museum.

3. Repairs, Restoration, Maintenance etc..

- (1) Spurwheel : the millwright has been back as promised and sorted out the new wooden cogs. They are now working well and look good.
- (2) Pitwheel : 42 of the 92 wooden cogs had worked loose and needed to be 'repacked'. Work completed successfully using the new 'old' nails.
- (3) Burr stones stonecase : has been successfully "solidified" i.e. the rotten timbers between the inner and outer sheet metal covers were treated with (very expensive) epoxy resin to make them firm (solid).
- (4) Pentrough "spreader" (holds the sides of the pentrough apart) : the rotten wooden one has been replaced by a metal one made by Chris Tugby, a new volunteer.
- (5) New Bridge : has been covered with expanded metal to make the surface 'non-slip' - the old mesh which was not tough enough had worn out. Cost of £155 met by a gift from the Ivinghoe Entertainment's Committee for which we are grateful.

- (6) Pitwheel Guard : the opening in the guard to allow access to the jack ring handle has been fitted with a hinged flap to close it off for greater safety. Made by Chris Tugby.
- (7) Conservation : considerable work done. Many of the items in the 'collection' have been cleaned and treated e.g. the 3 seed cleaning machines, peakstone furniture and many of the smaller items. Malcolm Lee has completely overhauled the chaff-cutter - many thanks for his help. A Conservation Record is now being kept. Thanks to Mike Morris for turning a replacement crookstring roller.

3. Finances

As will have been seen from the accounts submitted by the Treasurer, the mill is in a very sound financial position.

4. 2001 Season

- (1) The start was delayed because of the Foot and Mouth epidemic ; local farmers' did not wish the mill to be opened to the public. After being closed for 3 openings, agreement was reached with them to open in time for National Mills Day (13 May) provided MAFF approved precautions were taken. The season is now reduced from 10 to 7 openings.
- (2) Mills Day was a disappointment with only 66 visitors - normally 120 to 150 would have been expected.

5. Conclusion

Despite the restricted openings, 2000 was another good year for the mill. Special thanks must be given, in addition to those already mentioned, to John Wallis, Bob Simpson, Chris Tugby, for help with maintenance etc., to B. Wright and Geoff Eccles for looking after school parties and to the volunteers who gave their time when the mill was open. Without their help we could not survive.

6. PROPOSAL THAT THE SOCIETY GOES AHEAD WITH RENEWAL OF THE WATERMILL LEASE FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD.

David Lindsey proposed that the Society should renew the lease on the watermill for a further 25 years. He explained that the present lease expires in April 2004 and it was important to begin thinking about the new lease now in order not to leave things to the last minute and to give ample time for all necessary consultations. The pros and cons had been fully aired in the Society's Spring 'Newsletter' which everybody had had an opportunity to consider.

In November 1998 he had a meeting with Richard and Paul Jellis, and both had signalled their willingness to grant the Society another 25 year lease on the lines of the present one.

He outlined a timetable which was in line with the Forward Plan agreed by the Executive Committee (and subsequently approved by Re:source), but which would need to be flexible to be able to cater for all eventualities. If this AGM gave its approval, the terms of the present lease would be reviewed and informal discussions begun with Paul Jellis in 2002, followed by more formal discussions and engaging a solicitor in 2003. The Executive Committee would be kept informed and consulted, and the Holding Trustees also kept informed. This should enable the Society to be in a position to sign a new lease before the old one expired. The objective would be to aim for a new lease as close as practicable to the present one.

During the ensuing discussion concerns were expressed about the condition of the dam and who would have the responsibility for it, it was suggested that Mr Edwin Moutrie (involved with Lacey Green windmill) be consulted; ought the lease be for only 12 years?; the final decision should be left until the next AGM. John Wallis said he had been comparing the income and expenditure figures of both the Mill and the Museum and these showed that the Mill was actually more viable than the Museum – its ratio of expenditure to income was much less (Museum £20,240/£29,246, Watermill £16,276/£7,276).

In seconding the motion, Mike Morris proposed that the Society went ahead with the renewal of the lease for a further 25 years, and that the matter be decided now and not be delayed until the next AGM.

The motion was passed with one vote against.

Publicity Report - Anne Ball

This is the end of my first year as Publicity Secretary. This time last year I thought the task was a piece of cake! I now realise how much on top of the job Jean was.

However, thanks to her very helpful hand over, things have run fairly smoothly and there is not a lot to report differently from last year.

We continue to find as many free advertising spots as possible, although this is getting a little more difficult and the Committee feels, rightly I think, that they cannot justify the expense of paid advertising.

Ian Walls kindly arranged for an article to appear in the local 'Focus' magazine and also the National Trust, South Beds Branch Newsletter, regarding the Museum, for which we are grateful. I believe David also contributed an article in the 'Focus' on the Watermill.

Both the Watermill and Museum are on the web, although David and Norman deal with this aspect of advertising.

From surveys carried out at both the Watermill and the Museum, many people arrive from adverts they see along the road, but quite a number of others arrive via the free advertising in the local press.

The leaflets were distributed again this year, to roughly the same outlets as last year and I would like to say a big thank you to those who helped with this distribution.

Proposed change of Society's name to:- 'Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society' Amendment of Clause 1 of the Constitution adopted 17 March 1977 as amended 25 July 1991.

At the A.G.M. of 18 May 2000 it was agreed in principle to change the Society's name, but subject to being taken to the Executive Committee Meeting, which was held on 6 July 2000. At this meeting it was proposed by Norman Groom and seconded by Bob Rayner and carried with the exception of John Wallis who abstained.

It was agreed at this Annual General Meeting to change the name to 'Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society' and carried, with the exception of one vote against.

Election of Officers and Committee

		<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Seconded by</u>
<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Bob Rayner</u>	Norman Groom	Peter Bunker
<u>Vice Chairman</u>	<u>Mike Sear</u>	Gillian Arney	David Goseltine

The rest of the Officers and Committee were voted enbloc

This was proposed by Jean de Selincourt and seconded by Don Brooks and carried.

<u>Treasurer</u>	<u>John Wallis</u>
<u>Secretary</u>	<u>Brenda Grace</u>
<u>Museum Manager</u>	<u>Norman Groom</u>
<u>Watermill Manager</u>	<u>David Lindsey</u>
<u>Programme Secretary</u>	<u>Sue Lipscomb</u>
<u>Crafts co-ordinator</u>	<u>Val Rayner</u>
<u>Trading Secretary</u>	<u>Jeannette Wallis</u>

Publicity Secretary **Anne Ball**

Archivist **Gillian Arney**

Independent Examiner **David Hardwick**

Proposed by David Lindsey
Seconded by Norman Groom

Mike Morris said he would like to express a vote of thanks to the Officers and Committee.

David Lindsey said that we need new blood on the committee and new ideas.

Jeff Hawkins asked if Malcolm Lee would like to join the committee, to this he agreed. This was seconded by Sylvia Andrews and carried.

Any other business

Norman Groom asked if anyone held keys for the Museum and were not using them now could they please return them.

Membership subscriptions were due on 1 April, if anyone wanted to pay tonight John Wallis would be pleased to take the money.

Ron Treacher brought up the subject of the Castlemead housing site and hoped we would have publicity there. The reply was that our leaflets have been taken to the Wilcon site office and they are willing to put them with their brochures.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Following the meeting Gillian Arney illustrated a slice of local history about the West family, the shoe and boot repairers.