

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 MAY 2002 AT 8.00PM IN THE NEW COMMITTEE ROOM AT PITSTONE MEMORIAL HALL.

Present:-

John Wallis (Treasurer) who chaired the meeting, Brenda Grace (Secretary) Norman Groom (Museum Manager) David Lindsey (Watermill Manager) Gillian Arney (Archivist) Jeannette Wallis (Trading Secretary) and Sue Lipscomb (Programme Secretary) and twenty four members.

Apologies were received from:-

Val Rayner, Malcolm Lee, Anne Ball, David Goseltine, Corral McCormack, John and Jean Davis, Jean de Selincourt, B Wright, Ron and Jean Treacher, Les Laing, Les and Hilda Jones and Norman Binks.

Minutes of the 2001 A.G.M were agreed and signed.

John Wallis opened the meeting by saying that this is the first A.G.M. under the new name of Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society.

As we all know this has been a very sad time for the Society with the loss of Jeff Hawkins on 16 December 2001. Jeff started the museum collection with Don Levy and the Young Farmers Club in the 1960's. Following his death Mike Sear died on 21 December. Mike had been involved with the Society over many years and was Chairman of the Society for the last 10 years, and he suffered a stroke in August 2000.

John Greenwell died in January, he was seen working in the Wheelwrights/Carpenters shop on most of the open days at the Museum. Bob Grace died in March, he was a local historian and gave items to the Museum including the Gas Engine, which came from Grace's Corn Merchants of Akeman Street, Tring.

At the end of March Bob Rayner died suddenly and he was at that time Chairman of the Society. Bob had been involved with the Society over many years and had taken over from Mike Sear following his stroke.

Forthcoming events for the Society are: Monday 3rd June Jubilee Open Day at the Museum, Tuesday 4 June – Watermill Jubilee Open Day. Flour bags can be purchased for £1.

Matters arising

No matters arising

TREASURER'S REPORT – John Wallis

Total funds as at 31 March 2002 were £25,527 made up as follows:-

General Fund	1902
Museum	7906
Trading	3397
Watermill	12322

General Fund: (Net income £280)

Income – Photocopier problems mostly during winter months, but income from the sale of museum guides could have been credited instead of trading fund since all guides are printed on our machine.
Monthly Meetings - + £80, but speakers' expenses up £32.

Expenses – Hall Hire: + £77 some of last years costs not invoiced until after 31/3. Printing: + £104 Committee minutes and Newsletter frequently having to be printed elsewhere due to our photocopier problems.

Museum Fund : (Net income £2422)

Income – Admissions + £860 prices of admission increased.
Sales + £357 second-hand books, plants and museum guides.

Expenses – Advertising costs £432 were 13.4% of admissions income (2000/01 was 16.3%).

Electricity + £80 considerable building activity this year hence more electricity being used.

NFU Insurance + £70 our mutual bonus reduction in premium was only 11% (28.5% last year).

Trading Fund : (Net expense £376)

All sales income £1496 transferred to Museum and Watermill funds and no apportionment of NSIB interest credited this year.

Watermill Fund: (Net income £2223)

Income – Donations + £211, Milling Days (net) + £131

NFU Insurance + £151 see Museum Fund explanation plus increase includes £53.50 part tractor rides and tools stored at museum charged in error. This will be adjusted in the 2002/2003 accounts.

MUSEUM REPORT – Norman Groom

To say that this year has been an eventful one is somewhat of an understatement. We have had our highs and lows and the period through December onwards being the lowest of the low. The loss of so many members, all, who had a close involvement with the museum, was a great blow. With the death of Jeff Hawkins we lost a great deal of knowledge relating to the recent past of the farm, although we have some continuity through his close friends Don Levy and Reg Jellis.

Mike Sear was deeply involved in the rejuvenation of the museum since the lease was signed in the early 90's and Bob Rayner was becoming a great asset prior to his untimely death. However before this unfortunate period, progress at the museum continued at a fast pace. Slowly but surely more volunteers are appearing on our Tuesday work day and we now have a wide range of trades and professions available to us.

By the beginning of last year's open season, the area in front of the engine room had been converted from an uneven, dusty chalk floor into a paved walkway surrounding a central pebbled covered area. Later in the year, the floor area immediately in front of the engine room was also paved making it much safer for the general public.

Many smaller projects were carried on in the background but the major one this year was converting the stables into the new meeting room. Early in 2001 an agreement with Jeff allowed us to start clearing the stables. The team spent several weeks finishing the covering on Jeff's off-site storage barn, which allowed us to quickly shift the contents of the stables. We employed a professional sand blaster to clean the walls and the ceiling beams. This saved us weeks of work and revealed a rather magnificent brick wall under layers of whitewash. Many months of work followed on the room and the adjacent kitchen area, including a raised timber and carpeted floor. Completion is expected in the next few months.

The 2001 Open season started with a major problem, that of the Foot and Mouth restrictions. Our problem was that we had a small number of sheep in our orchard and the owner was desperate in case they should be affected by the disease. However Don Levy came to our aid and erected an electric fence to keep the sheep well away from the drive and we were able to open on all days.

Attendance and income on the open days is slowly improving each year, especially on the Bank Holiday Mondays. The catering is our greatest asset on all our days but having it on Bank Holidays has produced the greatest improvement, so much so that the income on those days often approaches that of the special days. If one takes the admissions income on the 2002 Bank Holiday Monday and corrects for the fact that the entrance charge is £2 as opposed to £3 on the special days, then the admissions income would be the greatest for any one day I have ever known.

One other factor that must be responsible for bringing more people to the museum is the advertising. We were fortunate in having three stories published in the local papers throughout 2001. One was about the filming of 'My Uncle Silas' in which the museum was very much involved, the others were the story about the Crossley Gas Engine and the Lancaster Cockpit Project. Although not exactly 'rural life' the Lancaster has certainly been a hit with member of the public.

Prior to 2001, I had taken over the museum website from Mike Sear and completely rehashed it. So far we have had over 500 people accessing the site. We have a new model railway layout at the museum and many of the existing rooms have been cleaned and re-laid out.

Early this year we had a visit from our insurers regarding the subject of safety for the general public. We were somewhat concerned due to the amount of machinery that we have but he was very understanding and only recommended changes that could be easily implemented.

One of the high spots for the museum was achieving full registration. Although it has no direct benefit, it is a feather in our cap and we can now stand alongside other museums without feeling quite so much of a bunch of amateurs.

The biggest change of direction at the museum came with the death of Jeff Hawkins in the middle of December 2001. Under the terms of the lease the whole of the museum site came under our control. We already had the task of clearing two buildings, removing or disposing of items that were either not wanted or that do not belong to the museum. Suddenly the size of the task increased by a factor of two or three. Don Levy again came to our aid helped by Reg Jellis. Don has been advising us of what various items were and what they were used for. Reg has been instrumental in disposing of much of the unwanted and often broken bits and pieces and in doing so has raised many hundreds of pounds for the society. He has also donated a skip to the museum and we have disposed of many tons of scrap iron. Don and Reg have been working alongside William Hawkins (Jeff's son, and have been helping him to remove and store items that belonged to Jeff. Clearing and relaying out the site, creating a coherent exhibition of farming equipment, disposing of the old caravan will involve many months of work but everyone it seems is even more enthusiastic now that we can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

The last few months have been very busy preparing for the open season. I have made up some new road signs and introduced the extras 'Wheels in Motion' day on 12 May.

Following the theft of Jeff's Ride on Mower last year I have installed additional security items which will soon include two closed circuit TV camera's and a recorder.

Gill has a new helper whose husband has also updated some of our computers free of charge. This season's open days have again broken records especially for Easter Monday and the May Bank Holiday Monday. The 'Wheels in Motion' day had the best displays I have seen at the museum. We had over 40 engines, a model boat pool, model railway layouts and a fine selection of vintage cars; the museum was almost bursting at the seams. The only disappointing factor was the slightly lower attendance from the general public, a factor that we can never predict, although we still raised about £700 for the museum fund.

Once again I must thank all those that help at the museum whether it is behind the scenes, on the open days or on the working days. I have tried to avoid naming individuals as I am sure to miss someone out but I am sure that you all know who they are and without them there would be no museum.

Finally I will hand over to Gill our Archivist for any further details or comments she may have on the collection and its documentation.

Gillian Arney – Archivist

We now have three computers and three people to use them, one of them is an exhibition arranger with qualifications.

PROGRAMME REPORT – Sue Lipscomb

I always count the numbers of people attending each of the talks I organise throughout the year, and from these numbers I can gauge the popularity of each subject. This gives me clues as to what to book in forthcoming years.

Our talks during the last year have mostly been well supported, and the subjects have ranged between straw plaiting and old cine films, the Victorian workhouse and the traditions of May Day.

However the best supported by far was the talk about Windsor Castle and the Fire by Alan Frost with 44 people and a staggering 85 people for Pat Carty's talk about Cheddington Airbase. Thank goodness we had the foresight to book the larger hall for these two events. This brings the average attendance, this year to 33, which compares favourably with the 24 I announced at the 2001 AGM and the 17 at the 2000 Annual General Meeting.

With any luck we may well be hosting these talks in our museum over the road in the early part of next year. Please do continue to support our talks each month and above all, continue to give me your ideas for interesting topics and the new speakers.

WATERMILL REPORT – David Lindsey

1. 2001 Visitor Season

(1) General Public : Three openings were lost because of foot and mouth disease, but an extra day on 8 July was added, making eight in all. There were 521 visitors to the mill which compares favourably with the 545 in 1999 when the mill was open for the same days. National Mills Day on 13 May was a disappointing with only 66 visitors (120-150 would have been expected). Numbers did pick up with over 100 on the May and August Bank Holidays.

(2) There were two **Adult Parties.**

(3) School Parties : again many were lost due to foot and mouth disease. Even so, 1409 children and adults came to the mill, of whom 627 (45%) were from Dell Farm and 288 (20%) from the Chiltern Study Centre. In 2000 there were 2285, so the reduction of 600-800 could be attributed to foot and mouth.

(4) Sales : despite reduced openings, gross takings (excluding flour) on Sundays and bank holidays were virtually the same as in 1999 at £154(1999 : £156) which was very good.

2. Milling

(1) There were five milling demonstrations (one additional on 8 July), which produced 152 1½kg bags of flour (nearly 4½ cwt) which sold for £152. As in previous years, the mill's flour is in great demand and users comment on the good quality of bread it produces.

3. Repairs, Restoration, Maintenance etc..

(1) Mostly routine maintenance and conservation during the year e.g. re-wedging loose spurwheel, pitwheel and crown wheel cogs, creosoting the bin floor boards to kill mill moth and woodworm, treating the floor boards on the stone floor with woodworm killer, patching holes in

both floors, sorting out a problem with layshaft bearings, adapting and fitting a new shutter to the bin floor (not completed).

(2) In March and April this year, a new sluice gate made by British Waterways BW) Bulbourne was, after some difficulties, put in place and is now working well. The gate cost £551 in all including a new, longer pipe for the syphon. By fitting it ourselves, we saved £1150 the amount which BW quoted for fitting.

4. Safety

In March the mill was 'inspected' by a loss control surveyor on behalf of the insurance company, NFU. He was very satisfied with all aspects of fire and general safety apart from two minor extensions he suggested to the fencing around the sheep wash and mill wheel.

5. Finances

As you will see from the Treasurer's accounts, the mill's financial position continues to be very sound.

6. 2002 Season

(1) This began very well on Easter Monday with over 90 visitors, but National Mills Day was a great disappointment despite all the extra publicity with just 68. Hopefully numbers will improve.

(2) The good news is that six new volunteers have been recruited to help when the mill is open and an additional guide, Charles Thorogood has come forward for school parties.

7. Conclusion

(1) Despite the problems with foot and mouth and the disappointing mills day, 2001 was still a good year for the mill, with many visitors expressing their pleasure and appreciation at seeing the mill preserved and working. It remains a very valuable and important educational resource for schools; the teachers are fulsome in their praise of the mill and the way it helps their teaching.

(2) Grateful thanks are due to all who help at the mill – the volunteers when open and the 'maintenance gang', notably John Wallis, Chris Tugby and Bob Simpson, who, unfortunately is no longer able to come.

PUBLICITY REPORT – Anne Ball

We continue to use free advertising, mostly in local papers from Watford through Tring, Aylesbury and on to Luton for both the Museum and the Watermill. At present this amounts to about twenty letters for each open day. This seems to be a good source of encouraging people to visit and the number of visitors continue to rise. However, many visitors arrive via the placards on the roads. We are still looking for someone to put up, and take down, hoardings around the Tring area, particularly on the A41.

We have again this year reduced the amount of paid advertising, which did not justify the expense.

All the advertising for the Museum carries the web address and Norman gets a good number of enquiries via this source.

The leaflets were distributed again this year, to an ever increasing number of outlets. We now have very few leaflets left for the season. I would like to thank those who helped with this task again.

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

Proposed changes to the Constitution suspended until the next AGM due to time limitations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nominations for the following positions have been received:-

Chairman

David Lindsey proposed **Gillian Arney** and this was seconded by John Wallis and carried. This she accepted, but would only take this on for one year.

Treasurer

Peter Keeley proposed **John Wallis** and this was seconded by Brenda Grace and carried.

Secretary

John Wallis proposed **Brenda Grace** and this was seconded by Sue Lipscomb and carried.

Vice Chairman – Post not filled.

The rest of the committee voted en bloc.

Archivist	Gillian Arney
Museum Manager	Norman Groom
Watermill Manager	David Lindsey
Trading Secretary	Jeannette Wallis
Publicity Secretary	Anne Ball
Programme Secretary	Sue Lipscomb
Craft Coordinator	Val Rayner
Committee	Malcolm Lee

It was proposed by Norman that **Peter Keeley** join the committee as **Deputy Museum Manager**, this was seconded by John Wallis and carried.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

David Hardwick was proposed by David Lindsey seconded by Norman Groom and carried.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Norman proposed we move the Annual General Meeting to the month of November, one reason being that with the Open Days around May for both Museum and Watermill it is a very busy time. Some discussion followed and it was agreed this should go ahead. The financial year would stay the same.

Andrew Gould proposed a vote of thanks to David Lindsey for all the work he does for the Watermill. On open days children are very fascinated by the sack hoist and the hand quern.

Mike Morris thanked the whole committee for all the work they do.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

David Lindsey followed the meeting with videos of Ford End Watermill and Brookend Mill.

Agreed at the A.G.M. 14.11.2002
Signed by Gillian Arney (Chairman)