

DRAFT

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2006 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 8.00PM

1. Present:- Chairman - Kit Kite, Treasurer, Museum Manager, Membership Secretary - Norman Groom, Secretary - Brenda Grace, Deputy Museum Manager - Peter Keeley, Programme Secretary - Sue Lipscomb, Committee Member and Trustee - John Wallis and 12 members.

2. Apologies were received from:- Anne Ball (Publicity Secretary), Owen and Alex Wynne, Mike and Jean Morris, Ron Treacher, Les Laing, Moira Hegarty, Robin Carr, Jilly Kite, Jeannette Wallis (Trading Secretary) and Hazel Travis.

3. Minutes of the AGM 17 November 2005 were approved, agreed and signed.
Approved by John Wallis, seconded by Norman Groom and carried.

4. Matters arising

No matters arising

5. Chairman's Report – Kit Kite

2006 has been a successful year. Our finances are in good order and our volunteers have all done a fantastic job.

In addition to normal routine maintenance, some roofs have been completely renewed. Exhibits that were rusty and not working have been restored to their former glory. As part of an ongoing process of improvement some items are being reorganised and moved around.

A new model railway has been built, is running and will be welcomed by both parents and children.

Helen Hickson and her team of ladies have continued to meet the culinary requirements of staff and visitors alike, for which we are all very grateful.

Sandra Barnard and Janet Page are reorganising the computer system to improve the cataloguing of all items in the museum. When you realise that there are several thousands of photographs and slides as well as all the exhibits you can appreciate what a gigantic task they have taken on.

The shop is doing well and the rides are very popular.

Our craft fair was doing well but organiser Kathleen Haran would welcome a few more exhibitors.

Sue, our Programme Organiser has had a very hard year. Finding and booking speakers has proved to be extremely difficult and the small number of members turning up to meetings has also been disappointing. We are aware of the problems and are having discussions with Sue to attempt to solve this situation.

Brenda, as always, has continued to be her kind and supportive self throughout the year and, as we all know, the museum could hardly do without her.

Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone on behalf of Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society and I look forward to an even better 2007.

Kit Kite

6. Treasurer's Report – Norman Groom

This year you will find changes in the way the accounts are presented. I took over the job of Treasurer from John Wallis, starting in April 2005, the date at which these accounts start, finishing on the 31st March 2006. I have used a Database for the accounts as it allowed me to run a cash and current account in parallel which John's commercial accounting package did not.

The museum now handles the bulk of the income and expenditure, much of this in the form of cash and I can now transfer between a cash and current account easily knowing at any point in time what is available in each. I also needed a more detailed breakdown of expenditure to control that at the museum. The result is that this year I cannot give a direct comparison with the previous year's account details that John used to produce and the presentation is not perhaps as elegant as John's!

In the past the society has held four funds for convenience, but only one bank account. One of them, the Trading fund has been transferred to the General Fund. Although the Watermill ceased to be part of PIMS in October 2005, the fund has been retained until this year's accounts when all individual funds will be discontinued although a detailed breakdown of the funds will obviously continue.

The funds on 31st March 2005 stood at £23,445.43 on the same date this year they were £26,019.43 a substantial gain throughout the year. The bulk of our expenditure is always the repairs and maintenance at the museum and although this amounted to £6384.45 it was still down on the previous year.

You will have been given two sheets stapled together; the first one gives the total of the funds held by the society and the second a detailed breakdown of the accounts.

The third and individual sheet has been included for general interest as this year's museum income will appear on the AGM 2007 accounts. It does demonstrate two things however, on being that we are increasing our income at the museum in spite of not increasing prices on the gate and the second is that the Sunday open day income is always way below that of the Bank Holiday Mondays, in spite of the same amount of advertising.

Membership

When I took over the job of Treasurer I also accepted that of Membership Secretary. To ease the work load you may remember that we re-introduced joint membership such that membership cards, payment received and mailing labels could be easily produced or recorded using a simple data base. I do not have the membership numbers for the year 2004 but for the year ending March 31st 2005 the membership was a total of 161 members of which 82 were joint members. The membership has now fallen to a total of 142 members of whom 72 are joint members, a loss of 19 individual members. With the falling numbers at the monthly meetings the only contact many members have with the society is the Newsletter which is increasingly difficult to find both the time to produce and to find articles of interest to include within it.

Norman Groom

These accounts were accepted as a true record.

Proposed by Sandra Barnard seconded by Bill Barnard and carried.

7. Museum Report – Peter Keeley

You have all receive the quarterly newsletter which contains a detailed museum report. I do not propose to repeat any of this and am only intending to generalise and make comparisons.

The first big job the Museum volunteers tackled this year was the rebuilding of the west wall of the grain barn. You may recall that previously it was made from rather rusty corrugated iron sheeting with a very large doorway facing into the prevailing wind. This gave easy access to roosting birds (we all know what they do) and in the autumn turned the barn into a trap for wind-blown leaves and other rubbish. A grant of £2000 was obtained (from BOB MDS) and in January contractors moved in to install a roller-shutter door. Then, through the worst of the winter it was down to the volunteers to rebuild the rest of the wall with new corrugated sheeting on a new steel framework. The grant almost covered the new door plus all the other materials.

On Easter Monday, our first Open Day of the year, we easily broke all previous records in all categories of takings and visitor numbers. It was a hard day for all the volunteer helpers. The rest of the year showed a much more modest improvement over last years figures, but an improvement it was, and for the year as a whole we have done over 10% better than 2005. We have decided to stick with the same Open Days as in previous years although we have toyed with the idea of introducing an October open day. We have also toyed with changing the Sunday opening days to maybe either the third or fourth Sundays in the month to see if we can improve visitor numbers.

One of our failures has been to diagnose and repair the fault with the Crossley engine which drives the racksaw, and as a consequence this exhibit has not run all year. Those who have worked at the problem are beginning to lose enthusiasm, but we must have it running for next year as it is a big attraction. One problem is the physical effort required to start it; an ideal person would be tall and fit and with long strong arms and short legs.

On Tuesdays we now have a really good team of volunteers who are capable of tackling almost any job between them. Two tasks on which we would like to see more effort applied are the cleaning, re-arranging and improving the information labels and boards on the existing displays in the museum; and identifying, labelling and cataloguing the collection of artefacts upstairs which have not yet received this attention.

Generally Thursdays and Sundays are also working days at the Museum throughout the year, but on these days we do not have many volunteers. This allows Manager Norman and I to quietly get on with various tasks as we do not get the interruptions we have on Tuesdays by volunteers wishing to know "Where is this, where do I put that, and where can I find the other". We would, however like to see a few more helpers on these days.

For several years past John Richmond has been to the Museum on Sundays to cut the grass. We have a lot of grass on our site and this needs a lot of effort and time to keep tidy. John has now ceased to do this job feeling that he has earned a rest, and we cannot thank him enough for what he has done. All our grass cutting machinery is worn out and we are looking to acquire some bigger and better equipment for use next year. Also it is our intention to regularly cut the grass in our own orchard where the sheep used to graze 3 years ago. We must therefore procure a decent ride-on mower. We have just had a good professional hand mower donated to the museum to complement this.

Janet Page, a new volunteer is now helping Sandra Barnard with the archives. Work is progressing well with getting to grips with the vast collection of photographs that we have. Sandra is going through the many folders of photos, labelling them and including 'thumbnail' pictures of each folder's contents, including a spreadsheet listing of the folders contents and ensuring that they are correct to the Catalist main Database. (Catalist is the rather odd name for the computer programme we use to list all our artefacts and documents). There is still a vast amount of work to do until we can complete this task and we still have the artefacts to check. With recent changes at the museum many new items have been restored for display and others have been re-sited around the museum. We have to enter those new items on the master database (Catalist) and correct the location details of those items that have moved.

The plans are ready to be submitted to the local authority for consent to erect our two planned small extensions and are here tonight for you to look at, although they will not mean much to anyone not familiar with the Museum as a whole.

A new feature at the last of this year's Open Days was the running of an outdoor model steam railway. Not strictly a museum exhibit you might say, but models of large now extinct structures and machines have always been found in museums where it is impractical to show the real thing; and let's face it, steam railways are now extinct virtually world wide except for those run by preservation groups. It is certainly an attraction to visitors.

We have recently had a new volunteer, slightly younger, who comes from Hayes.

Finally we have been given an engine. This is a quite beautiful machine with an interesting and local history. The engine has been given to us by members of the Lacey Green Windmill. They in turn were given it by the BBC at Caversham, some years ago on the condition that they restored it and ran it in public. They ran it in 1996, once, and not with cooling water in it or else they would have realised how bad a water leak it had. It had no silencer and consequently made a lot of noise, we are told. They have realised that they are unlikely ever to have the resources to carry out a proper restoration so, as we have the know how and facilities it has passed to us. We still hope to have it installed and running by Easter.

Peter Keeley

8. Programme – Sue Lipscomb

Attendance at some of our talks this year has been disastrously low with two months registering 8 and 9 members respectively. I felt that the subjects of the talks have been as wide ranging and interesting as ever, so why are many of the members choosing not to attend? With this question in mind, I devised the questionnaire, which was delivered with the latest newsletter. Sadly only 33 were returned, but I have collated the information and thought it might be useful to summarise it here.

Of those who replied, 4 attended the talks regularly, 15 occasionally and 13 never. The majority of the latter group did not attend because Thursday was not a convenient day for them. Other reasons given included difficulty in hearing the speakers, poor car parking facilities and the fact that they lived too far away. The majority however, felt it would not improve the situation to hold meetings at the Village Hall. The vast majority felt that meetings should take place throughout the year. Very few wanted more social events, the majority preferring the talks. Some kindly outlined the brief they felt I ought to work to when booking speakers, and their ideas were very close to my own. Many made very appreciative comments about the selection of speakers provided so far.

P&IMS

AGM 16 November 2006

People were very forthcoming when recalling memorable talks, the outstanding ones being the talks about Cheddington Airfield, Windsor Castle and Everest.

Ideas for forthcoming talks were very interesting and useful and I will follow up many of those. Some thought that email contact would be good to remind them of talks and I will try to organise that.

My final question concerned ways in which we might improve attendance. Many thought we simply needed to advertise more widely in local magazines and use posters around the villages, others felt that a microphone for speakers to use would help the talks to be more easily heard, some felt that car sharing could be organised. One mentioned that she felt the refreshments should be served after questions had been taken and another mentioned that there should be a stronger sense of welcome at meetings.

Certainly these ideas give me food for thought and I will try to act on any that I feel are feasible in the hope that members will vote with their feet and that the talks will once again become a popular feature of our local history society. It is a thankless task for a programme secretary when the attendance for a talk drops below 20, as has so often been the case during this year.

Sue Lipscomb

A question followed Sue's report. Malcolm Lee felt that local people do not know that it is a history society, could it not be P&IM and L H Society. It was said that our new name was agreed following lots of discussion and we do not plan to change this at present.

Sue will in future make sure it says 'Visitors welcome' on her programme.

9. Publicity Report - Anne Ball **This was read out in her absence**

As usual, with every one's help the leaflets and posters were distributed well ahead of the first opening day this year.

We continue to contact local newspapers and radio stations by letter or email (24 altogether) regarding our Open Days and they are usually supportive. There were a couple of hiccups with emails and one newspaper now requires email 2/3 weeks in advance of opening day!

Anne Ball

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRMAN

Kite Kite

TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Norman Groom

SECRETARY

Brenda Grace

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Museum Manager

Norman Groom

Deputy Museum Manager

Peter Keeley

Programme Secretary

Sue Lipscomb

Publicity Secretary

Anne Ball

Trading Secretary

Jeannette Wallis

Committee

John Wallis

Non Committee position

Archivist (of computer records) Sandra Barnard

The above was voted en bloc. Proposed Geoff Travis and seconded by John Smith and carried.

The position of Vice Chairman is still vacant.

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Roy Geary said he is willing to continue with this position. Proposed by John Wallis and seconded by Brenda Grace and carried.

12. Any other business

12.1 It was mentioned that Jack Brantom is now not able to drive and therefore help at the Museum due to poor eyesight and is due to have an operation. Good wishes were sent to him from the meeting.

12.2 There was a discussion about falling membership to the Monthly Meetings. Mary Tyrrell thought it was the trend at present as she is involved with a W.I. and there is a falling membership with other W.I's too.

It was suggested that should we think of having an afternoon meeting just perhaps once or twice during the year to see if that was popular. Sue replied and said perhaps this could be considered but of course she would not be able to be present at an afternoon meeting.

12.3 A member asked if we could have coloured Posters for the Open Days, it was said this could be considered.

12.4 There was a reminder about the Dunstable leaflet and that we should advertise in this again. It was thought to be a free advert.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm