

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2008 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 20.00

1. Present:- Chairman – David Goseltine, Treasurer – John Youngs, Museum Manager & Vice Chairman - Norman Groom, Deputy Secretary - Peter Keeley, Committee Members and Trustees – Sue Lipscomb, Rob Barber, John Childs, Nigel Thompson, and 26 members.

2. Apologies were received from:- Anne Ball (Publicity Secretary), Brenda Grace (Secretary), Mike Malone, Mike & Jean Morris, Eileen Turner, Les Laing, Reg Jellis, Alex & Owen Wynne, Miss Donovan.

3. Minutes of the AGM 15th November 2007 were approved, agreed and signed by chairman David Goseltine. Approval proposed by Norman Groom, seconded by John Childs and carried.

4. Matters arising

A question from the floor enquiring as to the outcome of our quest to restore our previous years status of receiving a full rebate on our business rates from Aylesbury Vale Council was answered by John Youngs who said that so far we had got nowhere but would continue trying.

5. Chairman's Report – David Goseltine

First & foremost I think I should start this report by taking a look at what is our life blood – money.

The Treasurer's report and the analysis of the open day's income, both of which have already been circulated indicates that this year the latter was only slightly down on the '07 figures. All in all I feel that this situation is quite satisfactory.

There is no doubt that our working party volunteers have between them a wide range of skills and it appears to me that there very few jobs that we cannot undertake - petrol engines, old farm carts you name it (except possibly painting!). The main work day is Tuesday for around 6 hours when the total attendance is around 10-12, but smaller groups meet on Sundays & Thursdays.

This year saw the completion of the building to house the model railway which itself recently became the property of the museum, and this attraction has proved popular with our visitors on open days The extension to the Science Room is virtually completed. Some rather desultory work has taken place in cladding the underside of the roof of the loft over the meeting room and this can prove useful in wet weather.

Work has already started on the restoration of a light farm cart and is progressing well. It will be a companion to the already completed Hawkins wagon. This type of restoration is keeping our skilled carpenters (or should I refer to them as cartwrights?) busy Two of our volunteers are carrying out the restoration of a corn mill which was obtained earlier from Lacey Green. A major part of this particular restoration was the making 60 or 70 wooden teeth from kiln dried ash; however it is slowly taking shape.

This was the year when we became tenants of The National Trust as Jeff Hawkins left the farm to them his will. One or two meetings have been held with the Ashridge Estate Office and we are hopeful that they and the museum can collaborate in providing some form of educational service to local schools

We are planning to carry out a series of improvements to the catering area during the coming winter with completion by me Easter -09 opening. Some of the work will involve the construction of a false ceiling and replacement of equipment,

We were fortunate earlier this season when we received as a gift several items from a recently widowed lady in Studham. some useful at the museum and others eg. forks, for sale at the shop.

It is with no small regret that I have to report that our long serving, perhaps long suffering, Secretary Mrs Brenda Grace is no longer standing for re-election. We are deeply in her debt; however I hope that we shall continue to see her occasionally purely in a social capacity on working party days.

Lastly, and perhaps more importantly it was this year that we moved on from just being a museum to being an Accredited Museum by the Museums & Libraries Authority which progress involved an enormous amount of work by Norman & Peter.

Finally may I offer my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the success of the Society during the past year. In particular Norman Groom and Peter Keeley and for the above work which was in addition to their usual work in insuring that everything else involved in running our society worked well and efficiently and to our Archivist Sandra Barnard who's knowledge of computers never ceases to amaze me but not overlooking all those other volunteers who ensure that the roofs don't leak, that the racksaw works properly on Open Days, that anti-freeze is placed in engines which are not drained, that the grass is cut regularly and buildings are properly maintained.

There were no questions on the Chairman's report.

6. Treasurer's Report – John Youngs

Copies of the report and the accounts for year ended 31st March 2008 were available at the meeting. John briefly commented on several aspects of the report and accounts. He explained that occasionally, when Easter is early and falls in March as it did this year there are two Easter Monday open days occurring in one financial year. Easter Monday is usually our most profitable open day, and having two of them in one year, and none the following year, distorts our income figures considerably.

John went on to explain that he had decided to change the accounting system we were accustomed to to the more widely used system normally used by professional accountants, and explained how these systems differed.

There were no questions on the accounts.

John Smith proposed, Rob Barber seconded, that the accounts be accepted and this was agreed unanimously.

7. Museum Report – Peter Keeley

Peter said that it was barely three weeks since his last Museum Report was published in the Newsletter and as it was quite comprehensive, and as nothing of significance had occurred since then, he had not produced a new report for this meeting. Just one minor item was that the Museum had purchased at a very good price a number of additional items of rolling stock for the Gauge '1' model railway. This exhibit was proving increasingly popular on open days, admittedly to dads and kids, not so much to mums.

8. Programme – Sue Lipscomb

Once again this year we have seen some very good speakers including Dr Clive Foxell who spoke about the Enigma Code, Peter Humphries and his talk about The Neanderthals and Jem Bates with Wooden Narrow Boat Restoration. It was Jem's talk which attracted the largest crowd at 31 people but our average number attending talks during this last year was only 24 which compares unfavourably with last year's 33. I do not believe that the talks were any less well supported by our members, but we did not have a Cheese Wine and Antiques evening this summer; a matter which I intend to rectify next year. This is an event which always draws the crowds and the numbers attending always boost the overall average.

I must make special mention of Frank Banfield who saved the day at our September meeting when our speaker had to cancel at the last moment. He rushed home, collected his films and gave a very interesting film show to the assembled members.

Please do remember that I am always ready to listen to your ideas for good speakers and interesting subject matter for the forthcoming year.

Finally I would like to thank all those members who open up this room for each meeting and ensure that the chairs are ready. I really appreciate this support. We now no longer have the tea and coffee making skills of Mary Tyrrell, who was such a support over many, many years. I would be delighted if someone else could take on this job at each meeting, as it is sometimes a struggle for me to get here on time, let alone to come laden with milk and biscuits for the refreshments.

9. Publicity Report

Publicity Secretary Anne Ball was unable to attend but sent the following report:-

We produced some 6000 leaflets this year so have an even larger distribution than in the past. This task was completed ahead of the first opening day. As always our thanks to all who helped in this task. We continue to contact local newspapers, although the Leighton Buzzard Observer, who have been quite supportive of us, have advised me that they will no longer have a free 'What's On' section but will add our details on their website. We also advise local radio stations ahead of opening days but now John Childs and John Young deal directly with a couple of radio stations via the internet.

Norman Groom said that we were considering a different design of publicity leaflet for next year; it would be in full colour and of the 3-page fold out type on which much more information can be given. Of course this will cost much more and we need to see if we gain a commensurate increase in visitors as a result. Peter Keeley said that he also dealt with a third radio station on-line, but had no idea if it produced any tangible result as this would involve listening to that radio station extensively

10. Membership Report

Bill said he had not produced a formal report, but membership remains substantially constant, we gain a few and we lose a few throughout the year.

11. Election of officers and committee members

The deputy secretary said he had received no nominations. There was a proposal from the floor that the whole committee be re-elected en bloc if they were willing. The deputy secretary said that this would be in order as he understood that the holders of all posts were willing to be re-elected, with one exception; Brenda Grace did not wish to stand again as secretary, but he was himself willing to take on this task having done it for the past 12 months but on account of his failing hearing he did not wish to take and write minutes any more.

Barbara Barber proposed, Malcolm Lee seconded, that the holders of all posts except secretary be re-elected en bloc and this was passed unanimously.

Sue Lipscomb said she was willing to try minute taking. Norman Groom proposed, John Youngs seconded, that Peter Keeley be elected secretary. This was agreed by the meeting without dissent.

Officers

David Goseltine	Chairman
John Youngs	Treasurer
Peter Keeley	Secretary
Norman Groom	Vice Chairman

Committee posts

Museum Manager	Norman Groom
Deputy Museum Manager	Rob Barber
Business Manager	Peter Keeley
Museum Site Manager	John Childs
Programme Secretary	Sue Lipscomb
Minutes Secretary	Sue Lipscomb
Publicity Secretary	Anne Ball
Committee	Nigel Thompson

Non-committee posts

Membership secretary	Bill Barnard
Archivist	Sandra Barnard

12. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Roy Geary had said he is willing to continue with this position. Proposed that he should do so by Norman Groom and seconded by Malcolm Lee and carried unanimously.

13. Any other business

Jeff Travis proposed, Malcolm Lee seconded, a vote of thanks for the committee for all their work over the preceding year.

Norman Groom proposed, Peter Keeley seconded, a vote of thanks for the work done by Sandra Barnard up in the office, unseen, in sorting out our cataloguing backlog.

David Goseltine thanked all the members of the Executive Committee for their assistance in this, his first year as chairman.

Sandra Barnard thanked Norman Groom and Peter Keeley for all the help and assistance she had received from them in her task as Archivist.

John Childs proposed a vote of thanks to all the volunteer catering staff who came in to help on open days. Norman Groom said that he had been trying to organise the annual Saturday morning meeting for catering volunteers early this year, but this had not proved feasible and the meeting would take place on Saturday 17th January 2009.

Jeff Travis asked if there had been any progress towards arranging a supply of potable water to the Museum site; Peter Keeley said we had not moved forward on this as we had entertained hopes that the National Trust might be persuaded to do this, but there was little hope of assistance from them. Jeff suggested Anglian Water might be prepared to offer help on this as some utilities did make charitable donations, and Peter said he would approach them on this.

David Goseltine said he was very pleased to see Don Levy at the meeting and hoped this might mean us seeing more of him in the future.

Norman Groom announced the very recent discovery of a well on the Museum site inside the Owen Barn; he said we were considering making a feature of it.

Peter Keeley said the proposed allotments on our north and east boundary were progressing slowly, and he was due to represent the Museum at a meeting about them in the near future. It appears likely that we will gain additional ground as part of this project.

The meeting closed at 20:45. The AGM next year will be on Thursday 19th November. There were 34 attendees.