

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21st NOVEMBER 2013 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 19.30

1. Present:-

Chairman and Museum Site Manager – John Childs, Museum Manager and Vice Chairman - Norman Groom, Secretary – Peter Keeley, Archivist - Dennis Trebble, Publicity Secretary - Anne Ball, Programme and Minutes Secretary – Sue Lipscomb
Plus 20 additional members of PIMS

2. Apologies were received from:-

John Youngs, Sandra Barnard, Bill Barnard, Paul Chapman, Jean Morris, Rob Barber and Barbara Barber

3. Minutes of the AGM (15th November 2012)

These were accepted without comment. The approval of the minutes was proposed by Dennis Trebble, seconded by Tony Sergeant and carried.

4. Matters arising

There were none.

5. Chairman's Report – John Childs

The chairman began by giving his thanks to all volunteers without whom the Museum would not have enjoyed the successes of the past year. He mentioned particularly the new volunteers who have joined the team and have injected new ideas. He also talked of the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes doing such tasks as keeping the archives and producing the newsletter and to all those who help during our Open Days. One important task has been the regular cleaning of the rooms in the museum, some of which really sparkle.

The team have focussed on several projects this year. One has been the renovation of the loft over the meeting room so that it will become the home of the Cook Collection. John talked of Colin Cook who accumulated a vast collection of artefacts most of which he had restored himself. His wife has donated this collection to the museum and half of it has already been moved to the Big Barn where it will reside until all the objects can be moved to the loft area which we hope will be ready by Easter 2014. Another project is the new carpenter's workshop. This was open for our last two Open Days of the season and next year we hope our visitors will be able to see restoration in progress and one of the first items on show will be a cart which will gradually be restored. Once the Old Shepherd's Hut is restored it too will become part of our museum display. We intend to expand our range of displays each year.

Our Open Days have proved to be a success. This is particularly true of the Bank Holidays which are always well supported, but the Sundays when we open are less popular. We intend to advertise free admission for children on Sundays if they are accompanied by an adult. One problem on Open Days is that sometimes a lack of volunteer helpers prevents us from opening all areas to the public. More volunteers are always very welcome.

6. Treasurer's Report – John Youngs

Copies of the accounts for year ended 31st March 2013 were available at the meeting. They have been audited.

Since John Youngs was on holiday his report was read to those attending the meeting:-

Income for the year ended 31st March 2013 was £17,000, some £2,000 over budget but £380 below 2012 figures.

The cold wet Easter and summer in 2012 seriously affected our takings and it was the extra open day in October that brought us back to the 2011 takings level. The dates are not wrong, remember our main income is the summer of the year before our year end date.

Expenditure was well below budget, partly due to lack of volunteers to work on projects and partly due to cost savings so we ended the year with a surplus of £3649 as compared to a budgeted loss of £3715. We were obviously far too optimistic on our ability to complete projects.

The Society continues to be financially sound with, in the opinion of your Executive Committee adequate financial resources to meet any short term problems. You will see on our Balance Sheet we have £38,000 cash with over £8,000 immediately available. I would make the point that EC policy is to maintain our buildings and artefacts for the enjoyment of all and not to accumulate funds.

As regards now, takings for the current year are ahead of last year and budget but we continue to struggle with project spend due to lack of skilled volunteers.

There was one question concerning the reduction of sales of Museum Guides and it was explained that our stock of guides had run out and it has now been redesigned and would be printed ready for the next season. Another question concerned the high electricity bill and it was suggested that we should attempt to get a fixed deal or maybe a special deal as we are a charity. John Youngs will be asked to investigate this. Norman Groom proposed and Peter Keeley seconded the acceptance of the accounts and all were in agreement.

7. Sub Committee Reports

• Museum Report

Norman Groom explained that the museum report had been covered by the Chairman's report and also by his entry in the last newsletter. He explained that over the years the income was increasing but actual visitor numbers were not. He felt that the name of the site was not helping to attract people and it had been decided to rename the museum. It will be called The Heritage Park, Pitstone Green Museum and all leaflets and advertising will reflect this. He also spoke of the next restoration project which will focus on the New Grain Barn. The artefacts there are really packed in so that they cannot be seen to their best advantage. The Reaper/ Binder has been restored but now needs to be sited so that it can be appreciated. It would be great if this machine could be working on Open Days.

• Programme

Sue Lipscomb reported that the attendance at our monthly meetings reduces in number as the years pass. As programme secretary this is rather depressing. Before each AGM I calculate the average attendance during the preceding eleven months and this year the figure is 22. Our Cheese, Wine and Antiques evening always attracts good attendance and this year we had 40 members and their friends. We decided to try to boost the attendance at the Hobbies Evening this year by offering a supper and I'm delighted to say that this venture was a great success with 38 attending. I have always felt, in years gone past that the collections and hobbies shown off at the Hobbies evening were too fascinating to be seen by such a small number of people; normally just those who have put up a display themselves. I therefore aim to continue providing a supper alongside this event.

Another highlight of the monthly meetings this year was the visit to Ron and Barbara Hartwell's house to see their amazing collection of player pianos and listen to the music that Ron was able to coax from the instruments! I believe we shall be invited again this year so look out for it, as it will be a real treat. I also hope to book a visit to Bletchley Park, with perhaps a speaker beforehand to prepare us for the visit.

I will continue to do my very best to provide a variety of interesting speakers for our members' entertainment and interest and will maintain the brief of concentrating on local history first and foremost with talks about general historical topics and our local environment as other possibilities. Please do remember that I am always ready to listen to your ideas for good speakers and interesting subject matter for the forthcoming year and I do try to follow up all members suggestions.

Once again, I must thank Rob and Barbara Barber who serve the tea and coffee at our meetings.

At this point Geoff Evans pointed out that our meetings on the third Thursday of each month clashed with those of the Aylesbury branch of the National Trust. After some discussion it was decided that we should move our meetings to the fourth Thursday of the month.

• Publicity – Anne Ball

Another busy season has finished for us all. The leaflets were distributed in good time and my thanks go to those who helped with this time-consuming task. We continue to use free publicity wherever we can, including, of course, newspapers and local radio stations. I know most of the local newspapers are quite supportive but they have increasing demands on this free service and cannot always fit us in. For this reason most of the local radio stations are not able to give us a mention unless there is something special on. We also deliver posters locally.

The boards showing our open day are put up just before an open day and taken down immediately after. This appears to bring in quite a few visitors, so is successful but again this depends on our volunteers.

John Childs added that we intend to invest in new advertising boards to attract people and direct them to the site on open days and one will be placed at the National Trust's visitors' centre at Ashridge and on Dunstable Downs. It was suggested that these should include a website address and a QR code. The garden Centre at Tring will also house a Museum publicity board.

Another member pointed out that there was often no publicity of the local village notice boards. Peter Farrar already writes an article about the museum for The Vine, the Leighton Buzzard newsletter and offered to put this in a range of other village newsletters.

• Membership Report – Bill Barnard

Membership numbers stand at 174 the highest number that I can recall ever. Only 8 of last year's members did not renew this year, but we gained 28 new members, mainly at our Open Days. Lastly, I do not want to be re-elected to the committee for 2014 due to the lack of support and understanding for myself, and my wife Sandra, from some of the committee, and some members, over an incident at the October Open Day. I will carry on as Membership Secretary and Sandra, who has worked hard for the museum for 13 years, will continue to do the quarterly

Newsletters. This is mainly to help Norman out, as he has been our main supporter. But other aspects of our voluntary work at the museum will be slowly phased out.

8. Membership Fees

It was proposed that the membership fees should remain at £10.00 per annum for a single person and £15.00 per annum for a couple. Norman Groom pointed out that some people chose to pay membership when they visit the museum as it is cheaper to do that and gain entry for all family members rather than to pay the admission charges. Many members felt that the membership fees were too reasonable and it was decided that they would be reviewed for the following year.

9. Holding Trustees

One holding trustee has passed away and another, Bob Morgan has indicated his wish to retire from his position. Peter Keeley has proposed and Bill Barnard has seconded that William Hawkins be appointed a Holding Trustee. Also Dennis Trebble proposed and Paul Chapman seconded that John Youngs be appointed to the other post. Both have agreed to serve and this was agreed by all at the meeting.

10. Election of officers and committee members

• Officers

It was proposed by Norman Groom and seconded by Peter Keeley that John Youngs should resume the post of Treasurer. This was unanimously agreed.

It was proposed by Dennis Trebble and seconded by John Childs that Peter Farrar should be elected as a new committee member. This was unanimously agreed.

Chairman – John Childs

Vice Chairman – Norman Groom

Treasurer – John Youngs

Secretary – Peter Keeley

The above executive committee officers were re-elected en bloc. This was proposed by Norman Groom and seconded by Peter Keeley

• Other Executive Committee Members

The other Committee Members all stood down and all except Sandra Barnard and William Barnard offered themselves for re-election. They were re-elected en bloc by those present at the meeting. This was proposed by Dennis Trebble and seconded by John Childs.

11. Appointment of Independent Accounts Examiner

Tony Sargeant was appointed to this post.

12. Any other business

3 Items were discussed

- It was suggested that when a member renews their membership they should provide stamps to cover the postage of their newsletters. Dennis Trebble mentioned that we were considering giving members the option of receiving their newsletter by email. This has the advantage of being in colour.
- Norman Groom talked of putting the advertising boards in place two weeks ahead of each Open Day so that the museum receives the maximum amount of publicity.
- There was a brief discussion regarding the start time of the AGM but it was agreed that in future years the start time should remain at 7.30pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20:20 pm.

