

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27th NOVEMBER 2014 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 19.30

1. Present:-

Chairman and Museum Site Manager – John Childs
Museum Manager and Vice Chairman - Norman Groom
Treasurer – John Youngs
Secretary - position vacant
Archivist - Dennis Trebble
Publicity Secretary - position vacant
Programme and Minutes Secretary – Sue Lipscomb
Membership Secretary – Bill Barnard

Plus 22 additional members of PIMS

2. Apologies were received from:-

Sandra Barnard, Paul Chapman, Anne Ball, Mary Flower, Brian Davis, Libby Thompson, Mary Sargeant, Brenda Grace, Hazel Barber, Lance Redler, Margaret Redler, Jean de Selencourt, Joan Clarke, Rita Clarke

3. Minutes of the AGM (21st November 2013)

The second sentence of the Treasurer's Report was amended to read 'They have been examined' when referring to the accounts. Once this had been changed it was then proposed by Roy Smith, seconded by Rob Barber that the minutes should be accepted as a true record and it was carried unanimously. Last year's minutes were then signed by John Childs.

4. Matters arising

There was a question regarding the success of offering free admission to children and Norman Groom replied by saying that this seemed to make little difference and many had refused the offer and paid for their children.

5. Chairman's Report – John Childs

The chairman began by expressing his great sadness regarding the death of Peter Keeley who passed away on September 29th 2014. He had been a great friend to the Museum and all who volunteered there. Before his passing he had made a donation to the Museum of £3,000. The contents of his garage and workshop were subsequently received as a bequest. The superb models that Peter had made and some of his tools have been brought to the Museum and will be on display for visitors to see. John also reported that Roy Cutler had had a heart bypass operation and was recovering well. He was sorely missed by the volunteers and it was hoped that he would return soon. John then gave a vote of thanks to all volunteers and made it clear that the Museum could not function without their continued help and support.

There had been a preview evening earlier in the year to introduce members to the Cook Collection sited above the Meeting Room and although the displays were still being developed the area would be open to the public from the first Open Day of the season. John reported that the Carpenter's Workshop had already been opened to the public. One major project this year had been the refurbishment of the Chaff Cutter which dates from 1896. It is hoped that this will also be ready and running by the first Open Day next year and will make a great attraction for visitors.

The room that once housed the 3mm railway is now being developed to become the home to Peter Keeley's donations. The walls have been sandblasted to expose the brickwork once again and other improvements are being made. This should also be a great attraction for the first Open Day together with the new Book Binding room next door and the existing Print Room next to that. The Print Room had been opened during this year's Open Days when the two volunteers were able to operate the machinery and print personalised cards for the children who visited. During 2015 the shop will be refurbished, areas of the Big Barn will be reinforced, the tack room will be worked on and the grass cutting will be continued as an ongoing and time consuming but very necessary task.

6. Treasurer's Report – John Youngs

Copies of the accounts for year ended 31st March 2014 were available at the meeting. The Treasurer's report was as follows:-

I am commenting on the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 which covers the Open Day period of 2013. These have been examined by your Independent Auditor whose report is on page 1 of the Accounts.

Total income was £19k as compared to budget of £15.7k and the previous year £17.4k. 2013/14 was a successful year across all income headings. Open day takings were the best since 2009. Unfortunately current takings are down £500 on that figure. On the expenditure side this was well below budget at £12k compared to budget of £15.3k the main reason being minimal spend on projects presumably due to lack of volunteers but I suggest also because there was no large project with resulting high cost of materials. All other costs were below budget except Utilities Newsletter costs and legal. The minutes mention a question of the high level of Electricity costs the answer given was incorrect due to an error on the heading. This includes Water which we now pay for. Legal costs were for appointment of new Trustees and Newsletters bulk purchase of stamps. The result is a surplus for the year of £7049

Finally I must draw attention to the donation of £1000 we made for the donation of the Cook collection artefacts. My apologies for the typing error which says Colin collection.

Our Balance Sheet continues to be healthy with £46k of cash investment, the high current a/c balance of £13 is because of the dreadful low interest rates available to business/charities.

Additions to fixed assets were Space heaters, Radial drill & Gala tent, all have been fully depreciated.

It was proposed by Barbara Barber and seconded by Bill Barnard that the accounts should be accepted and all were in agreement.

John Childs made the point that it was comforting to know that we had a considerable financial buffer since our old buildings need a considerable level of care and repair and this is often expensive.

Tony Sergeant proposed a vote of confidence for the Treasurer and his management of the finances of the Society and he gave his congratulations to all the many helpers and volunteers.

Nigel Thompson reminded everyone that the grain silo was a heritage building and that its corrugated roof needed money to be spent on it. John Youngs attends National Trust meeting regularly and assured everyone that this is a subject that is brought regularly to the attention of the committee. Our society is obliged to repair the buildings on the site but the NT has ownership of some.

7. Sub Committee Reports

• Museum Report

Norman Groom reported that the room that will become 'Peter Keeley's Workshop' will be set out as a model engineering workshop. The cowshed has been refurbished by Roy Cutler before his recent operation. There had been a disappointingly low attendance on Open Days until the last two which were brilliant. Producing roadside boards advertising the museum has been a challenge this year. The new boards have had their colours bleached by the sun and will need to be renewed as advertising is everything in order to make our Open Days a success. More volunteers are always needed, particularly on Open Days where the rooms need to be manned so that the displays can be brought to life for our visitors.

There was much discussion following this report as people suggested ways of encouraging people to help on Open Days. Ronnie Farrar had recently sent out an email to those members whose email addresses we knew, inviting them to volunteer in the shop next year. Since this was quite a specific request the results were encouraging. Others suggested that this might be the way forward giving people a clear idea of what help is needed and outlining specific jobs. It was suggested that at times there are too many in the kitchen and that maybe people would like a variety of jobs during any particular Open Day. That requires considerable organisation and Ronnie Farrar agreed to try to co-ordinate these ideas.

Help is also needed to refresh and update some areas of the Museum where the displays are looking a little tired. Also help is needed when food and drink is provided alongside our evening events.

• Programme

Sue Lipscomb reported that the average number attending our monthly meetings had increased this year which was very encouraging. It seemed that members enjoyed attending meetings such as the Cheese, Wine and Antiques evening where food is supplied. The Hobbies evening seems to be going from strength to strength and it seems also that members enjoy evenings when they are shown areas of the Museum that are being developed. This year we showed the Cook Collection and talked about the work taking place to develop it. Next year we have decided to invite members to an evening where we can show them the Peter Keeley Workshop, the Book binding Room and the Print Room.

• Publicity – Anne Ball

Anne Ball sent in a written report:-

First of all I must apologise as due to circumstances beyond my control I have been unable to devote as much time to publicity as I would have wished. However, all leaflets were distributed in plenty of time for the first Open Day. I also wrote / emailed to the usual newspapers etc as in the past. However, as this is a free service there is no guarantee that we are included each time. The radio stations are inundated with requests and we are rarely mentioned.

However, we can go on their website, although this has to be done prior to each Open Day and not for the whole season at one time.

Although a decision was made a few years ago not to pay for publicity, it may well be time to reconsider this.

Roy Smith agreed that it would be worth investing in good publicity. Ronnie and Pete Farrar had put advertisements for Open Days on several websites and maybe this could be developed. Norman Groom pointed out that local newspapers would be happy to accept articles and photographs about various aspects of the Museum but again this required someone willing to take on this aspect of publicity. The problem with our road signs is that many volunteers are needed to put them in position and take them down for each of the nine Open Days.

• **Membership Report – Bill Barnard**

Bill Barnard made the following report:- Total membership now stands at 180, the highest total ever as far as my records go. In 2008 the total was 134 members and there has been a steady increase in membership over the last 6 years that I have been secretary and I hope we go on from strength to strength.

8. Membership Fees

The Treasurer talked firstly to explain the proposal to increase subscriptions which always needs approval at the AGM:-

Your EC are proposing an increase for Couples from £15 to £18 and for a Single person from £10 to £12. The increase is to ensure that we keep ahead of inflation reminding you that there was no increase last year. The substantial increase in postage in the last two years has a material effect on Newsletter costs plus speaker cost continues to rise.

Chris Smith proposed and Sue Denty seconded an agreement with this suggestion. Two people were against but all others agreed.

The treasurer then continued:-

Your EC are considering a proposal that new members have to be members for two years before they receive free museum membership. Existing members joining up to 31st March 2015 would continue to receive free entry so long as they continue as paid up members. The change means that members joining after 1st April 2015 will not receive free membership until 1st April 2017. Currently payment of £15 means we lose £12 of income every time a member visits. I have heard quotes of how the ZSL and NT give free entry to members but they don't look at the comparison of cost e.g. ZSL charge £191.25 for a couple to join but daily entry only costs £38, NT is similar at £95 a couple and about £12/16 daily entry.

The reason for joining PIMS is supposed to be "to help advance the education of the public in all aspects of local history and acquisition of artefacts etc." not to obtain free entry to our Museum. For your membership fee you get reduced entry to our events programme and a quarterly newsletter delivered to your home, not bad value I suggest. We seek your comments.

Some discussion followed and Mel Davis wondered whether this decision would discourage people from joining our Society. Others made the point that all those members who volunteer on Open Days have automatic free entry, and that maybe more members would be encouraged to help. The committee will make the final decision on this proposal.

9. Election of officers and committee members

John Childs explained that Dennis Trebble would be prepared to take over the role of Secretary of the Society and that Sue Denty was happy to become our Archivist in place of Dennis. Anne Ball was unable to continue as Publicity Secretary and Peter Farrar would be prepared to take over this role. We had vacancies for Committee Members and both Nigel Thompson and Mel Davis said they would be happy to join the committee.

It was proposed by Barbara Barber and seconded by Bill Barnard that the Officers and Committee should be voted in en bloc. This was unanimously agreed.

To summarise:-

Officers

Chairman – John Childs

Vice Chairman – Norman Groom

Treasurer – John Youngs

Secretary – Dennis Trebble

Other Executive Committee Members

Museum Manager – Norman Groom

Archivist – Sue Denty

Programme & Minutes Secretary – Sue Lipscomb
Publicity Secretary – Pete Farrar
Other EC members – Paul Chapman, Nigel Thompson & Mel Davis

10. Appointment of Independent Accounts Examiner

It was proposed by Barbara Barber and seconded by Norman Groom that Tony Sargeant should be appointed in this role and all were in favour.

11. Any other business

No items were brought forward for discussion and since there was no further business, the meeting closed at 20:55 pm.

Signed by the Chairman

Date